Theo. Sem.

822.

Presented by the Library
of Rev. Dr Finley, N. J.

9 – 3

THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,
Princeton, N. J. 9–4
33

Case, Division SCC
Shelf, Sec. 3103
Book, v. 1

SERMONS

ON

PRACTICAL SUBJECTS.

BY

ROBERT WALKER,

LATE ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF THE HIGH CHURCH OF EDINBURGH.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

A CHARACTER OF THE AUTHOR,

By HUGH BLAIR, D. D.

A NEW EDITION.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

Printed for THOMAS KAY, No. 332, oppoſite Somerſet Houſe, Strand;

And W. CREECH, *Edinburgh.*

MDCCXCVI.

TO

THE CONGREGATION

OF

THE HIGH CHURCH OF EDINBURGH,

THE FOLLOWING SERMONS

ARE

RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY

ROBERT WALKER.

to any which appear in the firſt or ſecond volumes; and that there is none of them which will not be acceptable to thoſe who loved the Author as a man, or reſpected him as a Miniſter of the Goſpel. —— The eleventh and thirteenth Sermons have been already publiſhed ſeparately; the one, in 1748, and the other, in 1775. The Editor flatters himſelf, that no apology is neceſſary for inſerting them. He wiſhed them to be preſerved along with the other Sermons of the Author.

THOUGH there were neither ſtriking incidents, nor much variety in the life of the Author, the following facts will not be unacceptable to his friends.

HE was born in Canongate, where his father was miniſter, in 1716. He received a regular education at the Univerſity of Edinburgh. Happening to reſide for a few months in 1737 with a clergyman in Galloway, he was licenſed to preach the goſpel by the Preſbytery of Kirkcudbright. In 1738,

1738, in consequence of an unanimous call, he was ordained minister of Straiton, within the bounds of the Presbytery of Ayr. He always mentioned this situation with particular satisfaction, and considered the years which he spent at Straiton as among the happiest years of his life. In 1746, he was translated to the Second Charge of South Leith. He was then in the prime of life; and never appeared to greater advantage than while he remained in this station, either in his public labours, or in his private intercourse with his friends. In 1754, he was called to be one of the ministers of Edinburgh; and as there were at that time three vacancies in the city, and he was the *senior* minister among those who were called to supply them, he was immediately fixed in one of the Collegiate Charges of the High Church. The distinguished reputation which he maintained to the end of his life in that conspicuous station, is well known to the public. He had naturally a sound constitution; and enjoyed an uninterrupted series of good

health, till, in the month of February 1782, he was ſuddenly ſeized with an apoplexy. He recovered at that time; but his ſpirits and vigour were greatly impaired. He went to the country in the beginning of the following ſummer; and his health was ſo far reſtored, that he was able to return to his miniſterial labours in the month of September. From that time he continued to officiate regularly in public, till death put an end to his labours and to his life together. On Friday the 4th of April 1783, it was his turn to preach in the morning. He left his houſe in good health, and performed the public ſervice in his uſual manner. In the concluſion, he diſcovered ſome ſymptoms of uneaſineſs; and in his return from the church, ſaid to a friend, that he had got a headach by preaching. Having reached his own houſe with ſome difficulty, he was inſtantly ſeized with a ſtupor; and though immediate aſſiſtance was procured, he expired in leſs than two hours.

The Editor does not preſume to delineate

neate his character. This has already been done by a more maſterly hand. The Reverend Dr BLAIR, who has given many other teſtimonies of reſpect for the memory of his deceaſed colleague, has been ſo obliging as to permit the publication of the concluding part of his ſermon, preached on the 13th of April 1783; for which the Editor takes this public opportunity of expreſſing his beſt and moſt grateful acknowledgments.

CONCLUSION *of* SERMON *from Eccl.* xii. 7. *preached in the High Church of Edinburgh, by Dr* HUGH BLAIR, *13th April* 1783, *on occaſion of the death of Mr* ROBERT WALKER.

—— AFTER what has been ſaid on the ſubject of death in general, and in particular upon the uncertainty of the time of it, your minds muſt naturally have turned towards that melancholy event which has lately befallen, in the ſudden removal of your faithful and worthy Paſtor; and you will eaſily imagine, that this has given occaſion to the train of meditation we have now been purſuing. Upon ſuch an occaſion, I know this Congregation will indulge me, in paying the laſt tribute of reſpect to the memory of a colleague whom I eſteemed and loved; and in connection with whom I have comfortably paſt a great part of my life. He was the acquaintance and companion

panion of my youth. For nearly the period of twenty-five years we were aſſociated in the charge of this Congregation; and during all that long tract of time, though we often differed in ſentiment about public matters, yet that difference never interrupted our cordial correſpondence, nor occaſioned any breach of mutual friendſhip. The character of his mind, indeed, was ſuch as fitted him for agreeable intercourſe with all who had any connection with him. His underſtanding was ſound and juſt. His paſſions, though originally ſtrong, were brought under remarkable government. His diſpoſition was cheerful: his temper calm and regular. God had bleſſed him with great natural abilities. To a quick and ſolid judgement, were added the powers of the moſt correct taſte, which he enjoyed in a high and uncommon degree. Seldom have any been endowed with a more juſt diſcernment of what is beautiful in compoſition and diſcourſe, or with a more accurate ſenſibility to what is becoming in manners and behaviour. Poſſeſ-

ſing theſe talents, he was at the ſame time modeſt, unaſſuming, unpretending. He was ſimple in his manners; ſimple in his taſte of life; altogether free from oſtentation or vanity. A manly firmneſs formed the diſtinguiſhing part of his character. As he acted uniformly upon principle, he was bold and undaunted in maintaining what he judged to be right; but without the heat of violence or paſſion. No man ever poſſeſſed a more independent ſpirit. About the advantages of worldly fortune he was little ſolicitous. He formed no high views. He made no ambitious claims. He was eaſily contented and ſatisfied; and as he was entirely free from covetouſneſs, ſo he was a ſtranger to envy. To the merit of others he was ever diſpoſed to do juſtice. His eye was not evil when they proſpered. He was ſuperior to the little competitions and jealouſies which prevail in vulgar minds.

These particulars, relating to his character as a man, I am thoroughly qualified,

fied, from my long perſonal knowledge of him, fully to aſcertain. With regard to his public labours, my teſtimony is of leſs conſequence to thoſe before whom I now ſpeak, who have ſo long had full proof of his talents, and experience of his aſſiduity and fidelity in the miniſtry of the goſpel. There, indeed, he appeared in his higheſt character, as an eminent and ſucceſsful labourer in the Lord's vineyard. To this important work his greateſt application was bent. With this, he allowed nothing elſe to interfere. His whole ambition centered in acting his part with the dignity and propriety that became the ſacred character which he bore. By the elegance, neatneſs, and chaſte ſimplicity of compoſition in his Sermons, and by the uncommon grace and energy of his delivery, he roſe to a high and juſtly acquired reputation. But mere reputation was not his object. He aimed at *teſtifying the whole counſel of the grace of God;* at *dividing rightly to every man the word of truth*; inſtructing the ignorant, awakening the careleſs,

careleſs, reproving the ſinner, and comforting the faint; as all who belong to this Congregation well know.

SUITABLE to ſuch a life were the manner and circumſtances of his death. It pleaſed Providence to carry him away as in a moment, from the diſcharge of that work in which he delighted, to the enjoyment of its reward. His death was like an immediate tranſlation from the work of the ſanctuary on earth to the employments of the ſanctuary above. He was permitted to eſcape, in a great degree, from the melancholy approaches of the laſt foe. He endured no long continuance of pain. He underwent no violent ſtruggle. The garment of mortality eaſily dropt off; and the ſervant of God fell aſleep in the Lord. *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the latter end of that man is peace. Bleſſed are the dead which die in the Lord; they reſt from their labours, and their works follow them.* May the *memorial of the juſt* remain with us *in everlaſting remembrance!* Let us

remember

remember them that have ſpoken unto us the words of God. Let us be *followers of them who through faith and patience are now inheriting the promiſes.* Let us live the life of the righteous, that we may die his death, and our latter end, like his, may be bleſſed!

CON-

CONTENTS.

Page

SERMON I.

1 THESS. iii. 8.

For now we live, if ye ſtand faſt in the Lord, - - 17

SERMON II.

PROV. xv. 3.

The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good, 43

SERMON III.

PSALM xix. 13.

Keep back thy ſervant alſo from preſumptuous ſins, - - 74

SERMON IV.

2 TIMOTHY iii. 5.

Having a form of godlineſs, but denying the power thereof, - 110

SERMON V.

ISAIAH liii. 3.

He is deſpiſed and rejected of men:—He was deſpiſed, and we eſteemed him not, 138

SER-

Page

SERMON VI.

ROMANS iii. 19.

Now we know, that what things ſoever the law ſaith, it ſaith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be ſtopped, and all the world may become guilty before God, - 163

SERMON VII.

MATTHEW xi. 28.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt, 186

SERMON VIII.

ZECHARIAH ix. 12.

Turn ye to the ſtrong hold, ye priſoners of hope: even to day do I declare, that I will render double unto thee, 213

SERMON IX.

1 PETER ii. 25.

For ye were as ſheep going aſtray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Biſhop of your ſouls, - 237

SERMON X.

HEBREWS iv. 16.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need, 259

SER-

Page.

SERMON XI.

ROMANS viii. 32.

He that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all things? - - - 282

SERMON XII.

ROMANS viii. 31.

What ſhall we then ſay to theſe things? If God be for us, who can be againſt us? 303

SERMON XIII.

LUKE xii. 35, 36, 37.

Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning: and ye yourſelves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Bleſſed are thoſe ſervants whom the Lord when he cometh ſhall find watching: verily I ſay unto you, that he ſhall gird himſelf, and make them to ſit down to meat, and will come forth and ſerve them, - - - 326

SER-

Page:

SERMON XIV.

1 CORINTHIANS ix. 24.

——*So run that ye may obtain,* - 349

SERMON XV.

ROMANS xii. 11.

——*Fervent in ſpirit, ſerving the Lord,* 373

SERMON XVI.

NUMBERS xiv. 24.

But my ſervant Caleb, becauſe he had another ſpirit with him, and hath followed me fully; him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his ſeed ſhall poſſeſs it, - - 401

SERMON XVII.

PSALM xxxix. 12.

——*For I am a ſtranger with thee, and a ſojourner, as all my fathers were,* 427

SERMON XVIII.

JOSHUA xxiii. 11.

Take good heed therefore unto yourſelves, that ye love the Lord your God, - - 453

PRINCETON
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY.

SERMON I.

Preached in the High Church of Edinburgh, May 5. 1761. at the opening of the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale.

1 THESSALONIANS, iii. 8.

For now we live, if ye ſtand faſt in the Lord.

THE author of this epiſtle is introduced into the ſacred hiſtory with other ſentiments and views than theſe words expreſs. He makes his firſt appearance at a ſcene of blood, conſenting to the death of a holy martyr, and keeping the raiment of them that ſlew him. Soon after, we hear of him making havock of the Church of Chriſt in Jeruſalem, entering into every houſe, and dragging both men and women to priſon. Nay, ſuch was the exceſs and fury of his zeal, that, breathing out threatenings and ſlaughter againſt the diſ-

ciples of the Lord, he perſecuted them even unto ſtrange cities: "I verily thought," ſaid he, in the preſence of Agrippa, "that "I ought to do many things contrary to "the name of Jeſus of Nazareth."——But here we behold *a new creature* indeed! What things were formerly gain to Paul, theſe he counts loſs for Chriſt: the once hated name of Jeſus is now become dearer to him than life itſelf; and he who in times paſt perſecuted the ſaints, now glories in the croſs, and preacheth the faith he had endeavoured to deſtroy.

In my text, he diſcovers a temper of moſt diſtinguiſhed excellence; a temper, my Reverend Fathers and Brethren, which I hope we ſhall not barely applaud, but earneſtly covet and endeavour, by the grace of God, to poſſeſs.

To unfold the peculiar excellence of this temper,—and to illuſtrate the importance of it to the miniſters of Chriſt,—are the purpoſes aimed at in the following diſcourſe.

THE *firſt* thing that demands our attention

tion is the amiable temper expreſſed in theſe words: *Now we live, if ye ſtand faſt in the Lord.*

The general meaning of the paſſage is obvious: It contains an obliging and ſpirited declaration of the Apoſtle's good-will to the Chriſtians at Theſſalonica. But if we attend to his ſituation when he wrote this epiſtle, and place ourſelves in the circumſtances of thoſe to whom it was addreſſed, we ſhall feel an emphaſis in the word *now*, that gives a ſurpriſing addition both to the tenderneſs and dignity of his ſentiment and expreſſion.

Had the time referred to been a ſeaſon of proſperity; had Paul, in the height of worldly felicity, meant no more than to aſſure the Theſſalonians, that, amidſt all his affluence, he kindly remembered them; and though at preſent beyond the need of wiſhing any thing for himſelf, yet that the report of their ſtedfaſtneſs, and the hope of its continuance, had made a conſiderable addition to his happineſs, and heightened his reliſh of the good things he poſſeſſed: even upon this ſuppoſition, I ap-

 prehend,

prehend, the particle *now* would juſtly be deemed emphatical, and worthy to be accented.

But with what force muſt it ſtrike us, when we find that it refers to a ſeaſon of adverſity!——Paul, at the time of writing this epiſtle, was a poor, afflicted, ſolitary man; baniſhed from his friends, living among ſtrangers, labouring with his own hands for a ſcanty ſubſiſtence, and deſtitute of almoſt every earthly comfort.

All this the Theſſalonians knew full well. With grief they had beheld his ſufferings in their own city, when "the unbelieving "Jews, moved with envy, took unto them "certain lewd fellows of the baſer ſort," and raiſed ſuch an uproar, as obliged them to ſend him away by night into Berea. They further knew, that the ſame unbelieving and envious Jews, upon hearing that he preached with ſucceſs at Berea, had followed him thither alſo, and ſo inflamed the multitude againſt him, that he found it neceſſary to retire as far as Athens, to get beyond the reach of his unrelenting perſecutors.

cutors.———Judge then with what emotion they would read this ſtrong, this endearing profeſſion of his concern for their welfare; *they* who, under God, owed their converſion to his miniſtry, and to whom, as I juſt now obſerved, his paſt ſufferings on their own account, and his preſent diſtreſs, were perfectly known.

He had told them a little before, that the bittereſt ingredient in all his afflictions, was the apprehenſion he had, that his ſufferings might have a tendency to ſhake their faith, and to prejudice their minds againſt the goſpel of Chriſt: "For "this cauſe," ſays he, "I ſent to know "your faith, leſt by ſome means the "tempter have tempted you, and our "labour be in vain. But when Timo-"theus returned, and brought us good "tidings of your faith and charity, we "were comforted over you, in all our "affliction and diſtreſs, by your faith." And then he adds, "*For now*," even at this preſent time, diſtreſſed and afflicted as we are, yet "*now we live, if ye ſtand faſt in the* "*Lord*."

Here then the pureſt zeal for the honour of his Maſter, and the moſt generous love to the ſouls of men, are happily united, and feelingly expreſſed in the native language of a warm and upright heart. ——I ſay, the *pureſt* zeal and the moſt *generous* love; for no tincture of ſelfiſhneſs appears in either: if Chriſt is glorified,—if men are ſaved,—Paul obtains his utmoſt wiſh; his happineſs is independent of every thing elſe; he enjoys all that in his own eſtimation is worthy to be accounted life, if his ſpiritual children ſtand faſt in the Lord.

And is not this a temper of moſt diſtinguiſhed excellence? When I called it *amiable*, I only ſpoke the half of its praiſe: it hath a *dignity*, as well as a beauty, belonging to it, ſuperior to any thing that is commonly celebrated by that name among men. Would we behold *heroiſm* in its faireſt and moſt exalted form, inſtead of looking for it among thoſe whom the world hath ſtyled *heroes*, we ſhall ſucceed far better if we turn our eyes to Paul of Tarſus.

Where ſhall we find ſuch determined courage,

courage, ſuch cool intrepidity, and contempt of danger, as in this good and faithful ſoldier of Chriſt? "Behold," ſaid he to the elders of the church at Epheſus, "Behold, I go bound in the ſpirit unto "Jeruſalem, not knowing the things that "ſhall befal me there; ſave that the Holy "Ghoſt witneſſeth in every city, ſaying, "that bonds and afflictions abide me. But "none of theſe things move me, neither "count I my life dear unto myſelf, ſo that "I may finiſh my courſe with joy, and the "miniſtry which I have received of the Lord "Jeſus, to teſtify the goſpel of the grace of "God." *Acts* xx. 22.

With what invincible fortitude did he triumph over adverſity in every frightful ſhape! with what noble freedom, and independence of ſpirit, did he exult amidſt thoſe ſufferings of which human nature hath the greateſt abhorrence! "Even unto "this hour," ſays he in his letters to the Corinthians, "we both hunger and thirſt, "and are buffeted, and have no certain "dwelling-place: we are made as the filth "of the world, and are the offſcouring of

" all things unto this day.———We are " troubled on every ſide, yet not diſtreſſed; " we are perplexed, but not in deſpair; " perſecuted, but not forſaken; caſt down, " but not deſtroyed:——as deceivers, and " yet true; as unknown, and yet well " known; as dying, and behold we live; " as chaſtened, and not killed; as ſorrow- " ful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet " making many rich; as having nothing, " and yet poſſeſſing all things."

And what was it that ſupported and enlivened his mind, under ſuch a load of complicated diſtreſs? Hear the account he gave of it to Timothy, which exactly agrees with the declaration in my text: " I en- " dure all things for the elect's ſake, that " they alſo may obtain the ſalvation which " is in Chriſt Jeſus, with eternal glory," 2 *Tim.* ii. 10.—Paul denied himſelf for the good of others, and cheerfully renounced every temporal intereſt to promote the eternal happineſs of men.

With what a graceful mixture of majeſty and meekneſs does he appeal to the Theſſalonians, in the foregoing part of this epiſtle!

" Our

" Our exhortation was not of deceit, nor
" of uncleanneſs, nor in guile: but as we
" were allowed of God to be put in truſt
" with the goſpel, even ſo we ſpeak, not as
" pleaſing men, but God, which trieth our
" hearts. For neither at any time uſed we
" flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak
" of covetouſneſs; God is witneſs: nor of
" men ſought we glory, neither of you,
" nor yet of others. But we were gentle
" among you, even as a nurſe cheriſheth
" her children: ſo, being affectionately de-
" ſirous of you, we were willing to have
" imparted unto you, not the goſpel only,
" but our own ſouls alſo, becauſe ye were
" dear to us. For what is our hope, our
" joy, our crown of rejoicing? are not even
" ye, in the preſence of our Lord Jeſus
" Chriſt at his coming? for ye are our glory
" and joy."

And what can attract our love, what can merit our eſteem, what can excite our admiration, if ſuch a temper doth not? A temper which, to all the magnanimity of the hero, unites all the piety and benevolence of the ſaint.

But

But it will not avail us barely to eſteem or admire this temper: it is neceſſary, my brethren, that we ourſelves be poſſeſſed of it. I ſhall therefore proceed, as I propoſed, in the

Second place, To illuſtrate the importance of this excellent temper;—the peculiar importance of it to the miniſters of Chriſt. And,

1*ſt*, It is of importance to guard us againſt that ſelf-deceit to which, of all men in the world, we are moſt expoſed. The office we hold removes us at a greater diſtance than other men from any of thoſe temptations to groſs and ſcandalous ſins, which wound the conſcience, and divulge the ſecret corruptions of the heart: ſo that mere decency of conduct may paſs with us for real ſanctity; and what is purely the effect of reſtraint from without, may be miſtaken by us for the product of a new nature within. Beſides, the ſtated duties that belong to our office frequently contribute to cheriſh this preſumption. God may enable us to deliver his meſſage with becoming

becoming warmth and propriety, for the ſake of thoſe committed to our care; and his word, though uttered by unhallowed lips, may enter with power and efficacy into the hearts of our hearers. It is an awful truth, that if we meaſure ourſelves either by our manner of performing, or even by the effects that follow, our public miniſtrations, we ſhall often be liable to err very fatally. Paul thought it poſſible that one might preach to the ſaving of others, and after all be a *caſt-away*; and I can eaſily conceive, that the preaching to others may, through want of attention on our part, be in ſome meaſure the cauſe of it. The aſſiſtance afforded us in our Maſter's work, may lead us to form a better opinion of our ſpiritual condition than is either reaſonable or ſafe; and therefore we have greater need to look frequently and narrowly into our own hearts, leſt the gifts we receive for the uſe of the church, ſhould paſs with us for thoſe peculiar graces of the Spirit which prove our adoption into the family of God, and manifeſt our title to the heavenly inheritance.

But

But did our ſouls burn with that fervent zeal for the glory of God, and that vehement thirſt for the ſalvation of men, which fired the generous breaſt of this Apoſtle, we ſhould be in no danger of judging too favourably of ourſelves. Such high aims would cauſe our moſt vigorous efforts to appear ſo little in our own eyes, that, inſtead of yielding fuel to our pride, they would rather afford us matter of ſelf-abaſement, as bearing no proportion either to the duty we owe, or the exalted felicity to which we aſpire.—Conſcious of our weakneſs, how earneſtly ſhould we then addreſs God for the influences of his Spirit, to aid us in our work, and to impart virtue and efficacy to the means we employ!——And, at the ſame time, with what holy ſeverity ſhould we examine the moſt ſecret receſſes of our hearts, leſt any root of bitterneſs ſhould find indulgence there, that might either unfit us for ſervice, or marr our uſefulneſs, by provoking God to with-hold that grace upon which both our ability and ſucceſs depend!

2dly, The importance of this temper will further

further appear from the influence it would have upon our public miniſtrations.——It would make us better preachers, as well as better men.

We ſhould never be at a loſs for proper ſubjects of diſcourſe.——This, you muſt be ſenſible, is not always the caſe: moſt of us, I ſuppoſe, will have the candour to acknowledge, that we have frequently ſpent more time in ſeeking a text, than might reaſonably have ſufficed to compoſe a ſermon: and we ſhall probably find, upon a fair recollection, that this waſte of time has happened moſt commonly when we ſet out in preparing for our public work, with no other view than to make a ſermon. ——Fancy is a roving capricious guide; but when neceſſity preſcribes, it always ſpeaks with preciſion. We may know with certainty what our people need, when we can only imperfectly gueſs at what will pleaſe them: ſo that, did the neceſſities of our hearers get the diſpoſal of our ſtudies, we ſhould ſeldom heſitate long in the choice of our ſubjects; and give me leave to add, we ſhould more frequently preach the ſame ne-

neceſſary truths, and preſs them from time to time with redoubled earneſtneſs, till they appeared to have obtained their full effect upon the hearts of thoſe committed to our care.

Nor is this all:—The temper I am recommending would aſſiſt us in forming and pronouncing our ſermons, no leſs than in chooſing the moſt profitable ſubjects.—As it would reject all uſeleſs unedifying ſpeculations, ſo it would effectually baniſh thoſe gaudy ornaments which too often put the preacher in the place of his text; or, as one hath well expreſſed it, ſerve only to evaporate weighty truths, and to make them appear as light as the ſtyle. —— Had we no other aim than to guide our hearers in the way to heaven, perſpicuity and perſuaſion would then become the ſole objects of our attention; and theſe, I apprehend, are more within every man's reach than is commonly imagined. I never knew any perſon much at a loſs, feelingly and intelligibly to impart to others what he greatly feared, or loved, or hated. Rules of art have their uſe: but though art hath collected rules, it

was

was nature that furniſhed them: both order and elocution are the offspring of a warm and underſtanding heart. Let us only feel to purpoſe, and then we ſhall ſpeak with propriety and energy.——Did we, like Paul, *travail as in birth till Chriſt were formed in the ſouls of men*, would not our tongue be as the pen of a ready writer?—Did we conſider that we ſpeak in the name of God;—that we ſpeak to the creatures of God;—*to* them, I ſay, and not merely *before* them;—that we publiſh thoſe truths by which only they can be ſaved,—and proclaim that law by which they ſhall be judged:—did we conſider that they and we are faſt haſtening to judgement, and that neither of us can know how ſoon the ſummons of removal may be put into our hands:—what ſhall I ſay?—would not Elihu's ſituation become ours, when he thus expreſſed himſelf, "I am "full of matter, the ſpirit within me con- "ſtraineth me: behold, my belly is as wine "that hath no vent; it is ready to burſt "like new bottles; I will ſpeak that I may "be refreſhed?" *Job* xxxii. 18, 19, 20. Nay, my brethren, with ſuch great objects

in

in our eye, we ſhould not only ſpeak, but we ſhould ſpeak as Elihu reſolved to do in the following part of the quotation, we ſhould ſpeak with an honeſt and impartial freedom; for thus he goes on: "Let me "not, I pray you, accept any man's perſon, "neither let me give flattering titles unto "man; for I know not to give flattering "titles; in ſo doing, my Maker would ſoon "take me away."

3dly, This temper would likewiſe have a happy influence upon all the parts of our external conduct.——We ſhould not think it enough to abſtain from evil; we ſhould carefully avoid every thing that had the appearance of evil, that our conduct might have nothing in it of a doubtful nature, nothing ambiguous, or that needed to be explained.——He lives, alas! at a poor rate, and far below the dignity of his ſacred office, who is frequently put to it to vindicate his conduct, and to prove that he hath not exceeded his Chriſtian liberty. A miniſter of Chriſt ought to go before his people in every thing that is true, juſt, pure, lovely, and of good report. His light ought to *ſhine* in

in the eyes of men; nay, to ſhine with ſuch ſtrength, that they may *ſee* his good works, and be conſtrained to glorify his Father in heaven.

A holy life is the moſt perſuaſive ſermon, expreſſed too in a language which men of all nations equally underſtand. It even explains what other ſermons mean, inſtead of needing to be explained by them. Men will ſee more beauty in a truly virtuous action, than in the moſt rhetorical deſcription we can give of it; and then they loſe no time, for they ſee it at once: whereas, beſides the neceſſary expence of time, much ſkill and addreſs muſt likewiſe be employed, to unfold it in ſuch a manner as to make it thoroughly underſtood and reliſhed.

In this way, my brethren, we may preach without ceaſing: and if we know any thing of the temper expreſſed in my text, we ſhall certainly be ambitious to hold forth the word of life continually; and ſo to exhibit the religion of Jeſus, that, in our practice, all who behold us may have an eaſy opportunity of reading the laws of Chriſt every day.

More particularly: Were we poſſeſſed of this temper, we ſhould equally diſdain to court the great by a fawning ſervility, or to catch the vulgar by a low popularity.

Theſe are the dangerous extremes into one or other of which every unprincipled miniſter is liable to be ſeduced.

The laſt of them, which is reputed the moſt baſe and contemptible, is commonly the reſort of thoſe only, who, having little to recommend them to the wiſe and good, can find no other way to emerge from obſcurity, and to thruſt themſelves forward into public view; for no man will ſtoop to this mean compliance, who is qualified to act in a higher ſphere, if he is not forced to it by hard neceſſity, either to cover a ſore he wiſhes to conceal, or to bribe men to wink at ſome criminal indulgence, which he cannot hide, and is unwilling to forſake. —But though the other extreme is generally ſuppoſed to be leſs ignominious; yet, when weighed in a juſt balance, I apprehend it will be found at leaſt equally mean, and in ſome reſpects far more pernicious.

The popular drudge muſt always aſſume the

the appearance of ſanctity: he muſt declaim ſtrenuouſly againſt vice, and ſtudy to have his outward behaviour decent and irreproachable.—Thus far the gratification of his favourite paſſion will conſtrain him to plead the cauſe of religion, and to ſay and do many things which may have a good effect upon the multitude, whoſe favourable regard he is anxious to obtain.—And though his low ambition may, upon ſome occaſions, prompt him to take advantage of their weakneſs, by inflaming their zeal about matters of a trivial or indifferent nature; yet, as he can only ſucceed in this attempt by perſuading them that ſuch things are important and neceſſary, it is obvious, that however he may impoſe upon their underſtanding, and give them ſtones inſtead of bread, yet he cannot be ſaid to corrupt their integrity, neither doth he weaken the authority of conſcience.——He may render them ridiculous, but he doth not make them knaves.

Whereas the ſmiles and rewards of political rulers (for theſe are the great ones of

whom I now ſpeak), are uſually courted and obtained by very different means.

As a ſupple complying temper, unfettered by conſcience, or even a regard to decency, too often proves the beſt recommendation to their ſervice; hence it is, that many who are candidates for their favour, are ſo far from aſſuming an air of ſanctity, that they ſtudiouſly avoid whatever can be deemed the peculiarities of their order, that they may have nothing to diſtinguiſh them from the men of the world, or to render them ſuſpected of the remoteſt diſpoſition, either to canvaſs the commands of their ſuperiors, or to boggle at any meaſures they ſhall pleaſe to adopt.

The pernicious tendency of ſuch an infamous plan of conduct is too apparent to need much illuſtration.——Hereby they with-hold from their patrons the moſt convincing and obvious proof of the reality, the excellence, and the efficacy of that religion which the office they hold obliges them to preach.——Deſcription and argument, if they are not accompanied with a viſible repreſentation of holineſs, will make but

but a feeble impreſſion upon thoſe who are continually beſet with the ſnares of proſperity.——Beſides, it often happens, that ſuch perſons, by means of a liberal education, are in great meaſure placed, (if I may ſo ſpeak) beyond the reach of ſermons: they have already got a theory of religion into their heads, and are not likely to hear any thing they knew not before; ſo that they need ſtriking examples more than verbal inſtructions.—Theſe, and theſe only, are of ſufficient force to rouſe their attention, and to carry home conviction to their hearts with power.

Did they behold men of moderate, or rather of ſcanty fortunes, unbiaſſed by worldly hopes or fears, conſiſtent and uniform in their whole behaviour, reſolute in every part of duty, inflexibly honeſt, and fortified againſt all corrupt influence whatſoever;—ſuch venerable, though imperfect images of God, would not only penetrate, but overawe their ſouls.

A holy and upright miniſter of Chriſt never fails to poſſeſs a ſecret dominion in the hearts of thoſe who are of the moſt

oppoſite character. Hate him they may, and probably will; but at the ſame time they are conſtrained to reverence and eſteem him: even "Herod feared John, and ob- "ſerved him, and did many things," becauſe he knew "that he was a juſt and holy "man."

Whereas, on the other hand, when they ſee thoſe who are cloathed with the ſacred character, paying no regard at all to propriety of conduct, but mixing with the world, and living at large as other men do; when they ſee them graſping at power, or ſcrambling for riches; ſpreading their ſails to every wind, and ready to embark in any cauſe that can recommend them to thoſe who are able to gratify their ambition or covetouſneſs: —— however they may avail themſelves of their treaſon, yet ſurely they muſt deſpiſe ſuch traitors in their heart, and look upon them as the dregs and refuſe of human kind.

But, alas! ſtrange as it may ſeem, it ſeldom happens that theſe perfidious men become ſo thoroughly contemptible as to be altogether harmleſs. Even they who

deſpiſe

deſpiſe them moſt, with a perverſe and fatal ſubtilty, make their example an occaſion of hardening their own hearts; fetching arguments from thence to extenuate their guilt, and to cheriſh their preſumptuous hopes of impunity: for it has often been obſerved, that no twig is ſo ſlender that a wicked man will not cling to it, when he feels himſelf ſinking under the rebukes of conſcience, and the overwhelming fears of approaching vengeance.

It is ſurely unneceſſary to ſhow, that the temper I have been recommending would effectually guard us againſt both the pernicious extremes I have been ſpeaking of, and render us equally independent of the *high* and of the *low*.——Zeal for the honour of our Lord, and the ſalvation of precious and immortal ſouls, would ennoble our minds, and break every ſlaviſh yoke in pieces. A true miniſter of Chriſt will *call no man Maſter:* like this great Apoſtle, he will endeavour ſo to ſpeak, and ſo to act, in every ſituation, not as pleaſing men, but God, who trieth the heart. It will ever appear a ſmall matter

to him to be judged of man's judgement: this will be his labour, his only ambition, that "preſent or abſent, he may be accept-"ed of his Lord." Which leads me to obſerve, in the

4th and *laſt* place, That the importance of this temper ſhall be fully underſtood and felt by us all at the hour of death, and in the day of judgement.

We muſt ſhortly ſicken and die:—that awful period can be at no great diſtance from any of us:—it may be nearer to ſome of us than we are aware of.———Let us conſider it as preſent;——and ſay, my Fathers and Brethren, were this the laſt day, the laſt hour, the laſt moment of life, what would ſupport us beſt? what would yield us the moſt effectual conſolation?———I need not wait for an anſwer; every heart muſt have made it already.——The only triumph of a dying miniſter is that which Paul uttered when the time of his departure was at hand: "I have fought a good "fight, I have finiſhed my courſe, I have "kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid "up for me a crown of righteouſneſs, "which

" which God, the righteous Judge, ſhall " give me at that day."——He who can ſay with this holy Apoſtle, " To me to " live is Chriſt," he, and he only, can with him ſubjoin, " and to die is gain." If *now we live when believers ſtand faſt in the Lord;* if to promote the honour of our Maſter, and the ſalvation of our brethren, be the objects of our keeneſt deſires and moſt vigorous purſuit, death can do us no harm: we may cheerfully look beyond the grave to thoſe pure regions of everlaſting light, and love, and joy; where " they that be wiſe, ſhall ſhine as the " brightneſs of the firmament; and they " that turn many unto righteouſneſs, as " the ſtars for ever and ever." Animated by theſe hopes, let us henceforth go on with fidelity and zeal in performing every part of duty that belongs to us: and " though Iſrael be not gathered by our " means, yet ſhall we be glorious in the " eyes of the Lord, and our God ſhall be " our ſtrength." He who graciouſly accepteth according to what a man hath, will not reject " our labour of love;" but will

will confeſs us at laſt before an aſſembled world; and ſay, with all the indulgence of a kind and liberal Maſter, " Well done, " good and faithful ſervants, enter ye into " the joy of your Lord." *Amen.*

SER-

SERMON II.

PROVERBS, xv. 3.

The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.

IN every age of the church the complaint may be repeated, that "all men have "not faith." Many who think they have it, are fatally deceived; and ſhall be found in the iſſue to have been utterly devoid of this gracious principle. True faith determines the choice, and governs the practice according to the nature of the thing believed. It is called "the evidence," or demonſtration, "of things not ſeen." Let the objects be ever ſo remote, yet faith brings them near to the mind, and renders them as powerful and operative upon the affections and will, as if they were both preſent and viſible. Such is the nature and

and efficacy of this grace; from whence you may judge, whether it be ſo common as men are apt to imagine.

The ſubject of my text will afford us a ſtriking illuſtration of this remark.——We have already profeſſed our belief, and we have done it too with ſome ſolemnity, that *the eyes of the Lord are in this place, beholding the evil and the good.* This we virtually acknowledged when we celebrated his praiſe: but we did it moſt explicitly when we offered up our prayers to him; for to what purpoſe ſhould we pray to an abſent, or even to an inattentive being? Yet if we examine ourſelves impartially, and try our faith by the only proper teſt, I ſuſpect we ſhall find too much reaſon to conclude, either that we do not ſeriouſly believe this doctrine, or, at beſt, that our faith is very weak and imperfect.

Were God viſibly preſent in our aſſembly;—were the great Immanuel, God in our nature, ſtanding in the midſt of us; would we praiſe him ſo feebly, or pray to him ſo coldly, or ſpeak and hear ſo unfeelingly as we do?—— And ſhall ſeeing, or not

not ſeeing, make ſuch an odds?——Did we juſt now behold the object of our worſhip, would the mere ſhutting our eyes render his preſence leſs venerable, or the influence of it leſs powerful? No, my brethren:—our ſeeing God could only aſſure us that he is preſent; and if an equal aſſurance is obtained by any other means, the influence of his preſence will in either caſe be the ſame. It is not therefore to the ſeeing or not ſeeing God, that any difference in our temper or behaviour muſt be imputed; but to the believing, or not believing, the reality of his preſence: from which we may juſtly infer, that every degree of irreverence in our minds, and every undutiful ſtep in our conduct, is a ſymptom of the weakneſs and imperfection of our faith; and, conſequently, that a courſe of known ſin, or the habitual indulgence of any corrupt affection, affords undoubted evidence, that whatever light we may have in our underſtanding, yet we do not believe with our heart, that *the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.*

When

When theſe things are conſidered, it will appear that infidelity, in one degree or other, is far more prevalent than we are aware of; and that, notwithſtanding our profeſſional aſſent to the doctrine of my text, yet the beſt of us have need to get our faith of this intereſting truth enlivened and confirmed. I ſhall therefore proceed to lay the evidence of it before you, in as plain and convincing a manner as I can; imploring, in the entrance, that powerful bleſſing, without which the ſtrongeſt and moſt perſuaſive arguments, like a dart thrown by a weak arm, will either fall ſhort of the heart, or if they reach it, yet ſtrike ſo feebly, as to make no deep or laſting impreſſion.

There are two judges, before one or other of which every queſtion of this kind muſt neceſſarily be tried; I mean, *Scripture*, and *Reaſon*.——Scripture muſt determine thoſe who confeſs its divine original; and they who decline the authority of this judge, can appeal to none other but that reaſon with which God hath endowed them; there they muſt ſtop, the cauſe can be carried no where elſe.

elſe.——If therefore it ſhall appear, that the doctrine of God's univerſal preſence and knowledge is ſupported both by ſcripture and reaſon, the queſtion will be finally decided, and unbelief can have no reſource but perverſe and wilful obſtinacy.

Firſt, then, This doctrine is plainly taught and repeatedly aſſerted in the ſacred writings.

The teſtimony of my text is clear and ſtrong: *The eyes of the Lord are in every place.*——They not only "run to and fro "throughout the earth," as it is elſewhere expreſſed; which form of ſpeech might leave room to ſuppoſe that God beholds things ſucceſſively, looking firſt at one object, and afterwards at another; but they are in every place at the ſame time. How awful are the words of Elihu! (*Job* xxxiv. 21.) "His eyes are upon the ways of man, "and he ſeeth all his goings. There is no "darkneſs, nor ſhadow of death, where "the workers of iniquity may hide themſelves."

Nor is his attention confined to "the "ways

" ways of man," by which is commonly meant his outward behaviour; he looks immediately into his heart, and ſees the inward frame and tendency of his ſoul: for " all things are naked, and opened to the " eyes of him with whom we have to do, " even the thoughts and intents of the " heart." " Man looketh on the outward " appearance," ſaid Samuel; " but the Lord " looketh on the heart." He needs no information from our actions; he looketh directly on the heart, out of which are the iſſues of life. Nay, " Hell and deſtruction " are before the Lord, how much more " the hearts of the children of men?" *Prov.* xv. 11.

Neither do the ſcriptures repreſent him as a mere ſpectator, but as a witneſs and judge, who ponders the thought and action with all their circumſtances, and makes a juſt and righteous eſtimation of them: " I " know, and am a witneſs, ſaith the Lord." —" The Lord is a God of knowledge, and " by him actions are weighed."—Nay, he weighs the ſpirits: " All the ways of a " man are clean in his own eyes, but the " Lord

" Lord weigheth the ſpirits," *Prov.* xvi. 2. He as it were puts them into a balance ſo exactly poiſed, that the ſmalleſt grain will turn the ſcale.

Farther,—the Scriptures not only aſcribe to God the moſt unlimited and unerring knowledge, but they even render it abſurd to ſuppoſe the contrary: for how extenſive, how ſpiritual, are his commandments! they reach to every part of our conduct; and not only direct the outward life, but give law to the moſt retired thought and inward affection. Thus we are told, (*Prov.* xxiv. 9.) that " the thought of fooliſhneſs is ſin;" and the tenth commandment forbids to covet; hereby giving life and ſpirit to all the former precepts; and teaching us, as our Saviour afterwards explained them in his ſermon upon the mount, that they include the inward diſpoſition, as well as the outward action; and not only prohibit external violence, injuſtice, falſehood, and ſenſuality; but heart-hatred, cauſeleſs or exceſſive anger, envy, reſentment; in ſhort, the firſt conception of luſt in the ſoul, as well as the birth of the ſinful deed. And can any

ſuppoſe that God, whoſe wiſdom is perfect, would give laws to his creatures, with the moſt awful penalties annexed to the tranſgreſſion of them, if, after all, it behoved him to be ignorant, in many caſes, whether theſe penalties were incurred or not?—No, ſurely.——The ſpirituality of the law is a full proof by itſelf, that the knowledge of the Lawgiver muſt extend to our thoughts, no leſs than to our words; and that the darkeſt corners of the heart lie open to his view, as much as the moſt public actions of the life.

Nay, which completes this part of the evidence, we find God actually judging mens hearts, and rewarding or puniſhing them according to their ſecret diſpoſitions. Thus it is written of Amaziah, (2 *Chron.* xxv. 2.) that "he did that which was right in the "ſight of the Lord, but he did it not with "a perfect heart."—David is applauded for his good intention to build a houſe for the Lord, though he was not permitted to execute his deſign: "Thou didſt well," ſaid God, "in that it was in thine heart!"—— And Abijah, the ſon of Jeroboam, obtained

ed an honourable exemption from that violent death, and want of burial, to which the reſt of that wicked family were doomed; for this expreſs reaſon, " Becauſe in him there " was found ſome good thing toward the " Lord God of Iſrael." 1 *Kings* xiv. 13.—— Upon the whole, then, you ſee how clearly and explicitly the Scriptures decide in favour of this doctrine, that *the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.* Let us now inquire, in the

Second place, What Reaſon teacheth us concerning this matter. And here I ſhall argue from ſuch principles as all men are agreed in,—Atheiſts excepted, and theſe are not parties to the cauſe in iſſue.——Surely none of us will heſitate to acknowledge, that God is the Creator, the Preſerver, the Governor, and the Judge of the world.— Now, if in each of theſe eſſential characters of the Deity, we ſhall find a ſeparate proof of God's perfect knowledge; how irreſiſtible muſt the evidence be when they are all united, and with what powerful conviction muſt it come into our hearts!——

Let us then conſider them apart, and try how far they can lead us in this important inquiry.

In the *firſt* place, I apprehend, that ſuch knowledge as the Scriptures aſcribe to God, will be found inſeparably connected with the character of Creator. Is it not reaſonable to conclude, that he who made man, and endowed him with the faculty of knowing, poſſeſſeth in himſelf a very perfect knowledge? nay, muſt we not conclude, that his knowledge is as far ſuperior to ours, as his nature is exalted above ours?—Here, then, Reaſon leads us, by two very eaſy ſteps, to attribute to God an infinite knowledge, at leaſt a knowledge that we can no more limit than we can do the Divine Nature itſelf.

The inſpired author of the 94th Pſalm addreſſed this argument to the infidels in his day, who ſcoffingly ſaid, "The Lord "ſhall not ſee, neither ſhall the God of "Jacob regard it.—Underſtand, ye brutiſh "among the people: and ye fools, when "will ye be wiſe? He that planted the ear, "ſhall he not hear? he that formed the "eye

" eye, ſhall he not ſee? he that teacheth " man knowledge, ſhall not he know?" ——To the ſame purpoſe Iſaiah ſpeaks, (*Iſaiah*, xxix. 15, 16.) " Wo unto them that " ſeek deep to hide their counſel from the " Lord, and their works are in the dark; " and they ſay, Who ſeeth us, and who " knoweth us? Surely your turning of things " upſide down ſhall be eſteemed as the pot- " ter's clay: for ſhall the work ſay of him " that made it, He made me not? or ſhall " the thing framed ſay of him that framed " it, He had no underſtanding?"—In both theſe paſſages, the omniſcience of God is rationally deduced from theſe obvious dictates of natural religion;—that we are the creatures of God,—and that we derive from him all the faculties we poſſeſs:—And the concluſion appears ſo juſt and neceſſary, that no objection occurs to me by which the force of it can be evaded. But this argument acquires an additional ſtrength when we conſider, in the

2*d*, place, That he is not only our Creator, but likewiſe our Preſerver; for " in him " we live and move." The ſame power that

brought us into being, is continually exercised in supporting our being; nor can we live independent of God for one moment. Try your strength in the easiest matters;—try if you can "make one hair white or "black:" and when you have found yourselves unable for that which is least, let this convince you, that you are far less able to do so great a thing as to support and prolong life itself.

Is the ability to move at all, then, constantly derived from God; and can any man dream, that God hath given him power to remove to such a distance, that his own eye cannot reach him?——Doth he enable us to think, and shall we exclude him from the knowledge of these thoughts, which we have no power to form, but what we receive from him? The absurdity is so glaring, that Reason must at once reject it with disdain.

3dly, Unless *the eyes of the Lord* were *in every place*, how could he execute what belongs to the Governor of the world? Can he order things aright which he doth not see? Or must his work lie unfinished in one part

part of his dominions, till he hath gone to perfect it in another? Or shall he carry it on by delegates, as weak and finite creatures are obliged to do? It were blasphemy to think so. With infinite ease doth he govern the world he hath made: and as he created all things in number, weight, and measure, so he disposeth all things according to the rules of the most perfect wisdom, justice, and goodness. And whatever objections may arise from a partial view of his administration, so that in some cases we may be tempted to say in our hearts, "How doth "God know, and is there knowledge in the "Most High?" yet Reason teacheth us in general, that the Lord reigneth, who is wise in heart, and mighty in strength; and that when clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgement are the habitation of his throne. But this could not be without the most certain and unlimited knowledge of all his creatures, at all times, and in every place and condition. How should he conduct this great family, which constantly hangs upon him, without the most intimate acquaintance with every

individual? And how ſtrong muſt our conviction of this truth be, when we conſider, that his providence extends to the minuteſt things? that "the very hairs of our "heads are numbered;" that "a ſparrow "doth not fall to the ground without him;" and that "when the lot is caſt into the "lap, the whole diſpoſing thereof is of the "Lord."

But the *4th* and moſt ſtriking argument for the truth of this doctrine ariſes from this principle, which ſober Reaſon hath always admitted, *viz.* That God is the Judge of the world: for as he is to decide the final ſtate of men, and diſtribute rewards and puniſhments according to the ſtricteſt equity, ſo that every mouth ſhall be ſtopped, and none ſhall be able to charge him with rigour or undue ſeverity; the trial muſt be fair and open, and the proof abſolutely clear, upon which a ſentence, ſo eſſentially connected with the honour of the Judge, is to be founded. But how ſhall this proof be obtained? ſhall men be adduced as witneſſes againſt each other?—This ſcheme is encumbered with two objections;

jections; neither of which, I think, can be eaſily removed.———If all are guilty, would there not be ground to ſuſpect, that every one's private intereſt might bring them to a general combination and agreement to conceal each other's faults?—Or, if ſome are innocent, which for once we ſhall ſuppoſe, yet even theſe may, or rather muſt, be ignorant of many things: they can atteſt no more than they have ſeen; and their teſtimony, at the utmoſt, can only relate to outward actions; the temper with which they are done, and the principles from whence they flow, are beyond their knowledge: ſo that no judgement can paſs upon the heart in conſequence of any human evidence.———Where then ſhall we go next? Perhaps you will ſay, that every man's own conſcience ſhall witneſs againſt him in that day. But what ſhould oblige conſcience to do this? will mere authority compel a man to become his own accuſer, when he knows that no other evidence can be brought againſt him? This, I think, is harder to be believed than any thing. In ſhort, I ſee no way

way by which we can extricate ourſelves from theſe preſſing difficulties, but by aſcribing to God that perfect and univerſal knowledge, which my text, and ſundry other ſcriptures, attribute to him. Reaſon muſt have recourſe to this at laſt, or deny that God ſhall judge the world. It is his omniſcience that ſupplies the room of foreign witneſſes, or makes their teſtimony valid: it is his omniſcience that overawes conſcience, and conſtrains it to be faithful: He alone can tell a man what is in his heart, ſo that he dare not refuſe the charge: and it is this infallible teſtimony of the Judge himſelf, who ſcans all actions, who weighs all thoughts, whoſe right hand doth ever hold us, and whoſe eye is conſtantly upon us, that will ſtop every mouth in the great day of deciſion, and convince the whole world, that his judgement is true and righteous.

Thus have I endeavoured to eſtabliſh your faith of this important truth, that *the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.*——I have argued the cauſe at the bar of Reaſon; and have

ſhowed

ſhowed you the intimate connection of this doctrine with the moſt acknowledged dictates of natural religion, to wit, That God is the Creator, the Preſerver, the Governor, and the Judge of the world.——It is poſſible that ſome may aſk, Why beſtow ſo much time and labour in proving a point which nobody is diſpoſed to deny?——Let this be my apology:——I cannot recollect the time when I ſeriouſly queſtioned the truth of this doctrine; but I can well remember a time, when it had no more influence upon my own ſoul, than if I had been ſure it was falſe: And if your belief be of the ſame kind, as I fear with too many it is, be aſſured you have heard no more than was needful; nay, if an infinitely greater Teacher do not preach the ſubject over again to your hearts with power, your preſent belief ſhall only heighten your guilt; and the fewer your doubts are, the greater ſhall your condemnation be. If your hearts do not feel the conſtant preſence of God, your verbal acknowledgements and ſpeculative belief of it, ſhall only render your caſe ſomething worſe than

than the infidels. Satan can ſpare this tribute to God: ſo long as your faith dwells in the brain, or in the tongue, he doth not grudge you the poſſeſſion of it; and if what you have been hearing ſink no deeper, I ſhall readily admit, that you have heard too much. In that caſe, I have no doubt loſt my labour, whether it hath been acceptable to you or not. But I ſhall not cloſe the ſubject till I have pointed out the practical uſe we ought to make of it.

And, *1ſt*, Let us take occaſion from this doctrine to admire, with humble gratitude the long-ſuffering patience and tender compaſſions of our God. Is he the immediate witneſs of all our ſins? doth he ſee the rebellious thought riſing in our minds, and doth he ſtill look on, and ſpare, till it be fully formed and executed? How incomprehenſible then muſt his patience be! We find it no eaſy matter to forgive our fellow-men, even when they are penitent; with what difficulty do we ſuppreſs our reſentment, though the injury hath been committed at a great diſtance of time, and our offending brother himſelf

was

was perhaps the firſt who informed us of it, by a free and ſorrowful confeſſion? What then can we think of the divine mercy and forbearance? It were much in God to forgive the tranſgreſſions of ſuch creatures as we are, though he had not ſeen them done, and knew nothing about them, till he heard them from ourſelves, in penitent confeſſions, and petitions for pardon: but to bear with us till luſt had conceived and brought forth; to ſee the whole progreſs of the mind, its plots and contrivances, till the wicked deed be done; to behold the heart full of enmity, without one relenting thought; to ſpare a creature thus determined to affront him, when by one word he could diſarm it of all its power, and render it completely miſerable! it is this which ſets the patience of God above all human, above all created underſtanding. O! my brethren, think of this.—Should an earthly prince behold one of his ſubjects, who lived within his palace, and was ſupported by his bounty, treaſonably conſpiring againſt him with his moſt inveterate enemies; ſhould he, inſtead of treating him with the

the ſeverity he deſerved, condeſcend to expoſtulate with him; and, in the moſt affectionate manner, intreat him to conſult his own ſafety by returning to his duty, and not to wreſt a puniſhment from him which he was unwilling to inflict; what do you think would be the ſtate of the traitor's mind in ſuch circumſtances as theſe? how would it confound him to know, that his much injured ſovereign had all along been privy to his baſeneſs, but, like the moſt tender father, inſtead of puniſhing, had only pitied his folly?——We may partly conceive this, but are unable to expreſs it.——The moſt artful deſcription could give but a faint repreſentation of the various feelings of an ingenuous heart, upon ſuch an affecting occaſion. And ſhall not the tender mercy of our God have the ſame influence upon us? He neither wants power to inflict, nor provocation to juſtify, the ſevereſt puniſhment our natures are capable of enduring.—— What ſhall we ſay then?—He is God, and not man; and therefore it is that we are not conſumed.——O let his patience, to which

which we are ſo infinitely indebted, work upon our ingenuity, that we may not unworthily burden it any more! and particularly let us watch over our hearts at this time, when the ſubject we are upon neceſſarily obliges us to ſet the Lord more immediately before us, as the witneſs and judge of our preſent temper and conduct; for ſurely his *eyes are in* this *place, beholding the evil and the good.*

2*dly*, This doctrine hath an obvious tendency to cheriſh ſimplicity and godly ſincerity, and to baniſh all diſſimulation and artifice from our hearts. He who realizeth the divine preſence, will not dare to be an hypocrite: for he knows that his triumphing can be but ſhort, and his joy only for a moment. Man he may deceive, who ſees no farther than the outſide; but he cannot deceive God, *whoſe eyes are in every place;* who "ſearcheth the hearts, and "trieth the reins of the children of men." And to what purpoſe ſhould he labour for the applauſe of poor dying creatures, if he expoſe himſelf to the contempt and abhorrence of that infinite Being, upon whom he

he neceſſarily depends for life and breath, and all things? eſpecially when he conſiders, that the maſk he now wears ſhall ere long be pulled off, and his real character expoſed to the view of an aſſembled world, in that day "when the hidden works of "darkneſs ſhall be brought to light, and "every one receive according to what he "hath done, whether it be good or bad?" This motive to ſincerity is plain, and obvious to the weakeſt underſtanding. Formality, or mere outward religiouſneſs, muſt appear a vain unprofitable thing to the man who believes the doctrine of my text: for what can it avail him to be well thought of by a few during the ſhort time of his abode on this earth, if at laſt he ſhall become the object of everlaſting contempt; not to thoſe few only, but to all that ever did or ſhall exiſt, till "the mighty angel, "ſetting his right foot upon the ſea, and his "left foot on the earth, ſhall lift up his "hand to heaven, and ſwear by him that "liveth for ever and ever, That time ſhall "be no more."

3dly, This doctrine affords abundant matter

matter of comfort and joy to the truly godly. Omniſcience is the attribute of their Father and their friend; his eyes are continually upon them for good; he knows every thing that befals them, and is perfectly acquainted both with their wants, and with thoſe ſupplies which are proper and neceſſary for them. This qualifies him to be the object of their truſt and confidence; upon him they may quietly and cheerfully rely, who is never far from any one of them, and "whoſe eyes run to and fro through-"out the whole earth, to ſhew himſelf ſtrong "in behalf of thoſe whoſe hearts are perfect "towards him."

But the omniſcience of God is ſtill more comfortable upon other accounts. What a ſtay and ſupport did it prove to Peter, when our Lord ſaid unto him the third time, (*John* xxi. 17.), "Simon, ſon of "Jonas, loveſt thou me?" Yes, Lord, ſaid he, I love thee.—I confeſs indeed the baſeneſs and treachery of my late conduct; yet ſtill I do, and muſt proteſt, that I love thee. —It is true that I forſook thee, and impiouſly denied thee; and wert thou not the

all-wiſe God, as well as my compaſſionate Saviour, this reiterated queſtion would ſtrike me dumb, and drive me from thy preſence; for how could I pretend to love thee, or hope to be credited, after ſuch baſeneſs and perfidy? But this is my refuge:—"Thou, Lord, knoweſt all things."—Thou canſt look into my heart, and ſee thyſelf enthroned there; and therefore, notwithſtanding the juſt cauſe I have given to all the world beſides, to ſuſpect the ſincerity of my preſent profeſſion, yet I humbly dare appeal to thy unlimited knowledge: "Thou, Lord, who knoweſt all things, "knoweſt that I love thee." This is ſtill the ſupport of upright ſouls. As perfection is not the attainment of our preſent ſtate, the deareſt of God's children are too often carried away by the force of temptation; inſomuch that, had they to do with a man like themſelves, they might deſpair of being able to convince him that they loved him. But the ſincere penitent, conſcious of that affection which glows within his breaſt, can with tears make his appeal to God himſelf, and hope to be believed; be-

becauſe he to whom he appeals, needs no other proof or evidence to convince him, than his own immediate and unerring knowledge.

Once more, what hope and joy muſt ſpring up in the ſoul in its ſecret addreſſes to God, when it remembers that *his eyes are in every place!*—He to whom we pray, underſtandeth our very thoughts afar off. "Lord," ſaid the Pſalmiſt, "all my deſire is before "thee, and my groaning is not hid from "thee."—A groan, a ſigh, cannot eſcape his notice: nay, "he puts our tears into a bot-"tle, and a book of remembrance is writ-"ten before him, for them that think upon "his name."

Though words be a tribute due to God, yet he doth not need the information of language: "for when we know not what "we ſhould pray for as we ought, the Spi-"rit itſelf helpeth our infirmities, making "interceſſion for us with groanings which "cannot be uttered. And he that ſearcheth "the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of "the Spirit, becauſe he maketh interceſ-"ſion for the ſaints according to the will

" of God," *Rom.* viii. 26, 27. When the humble ſupplicant, like a diſeaſed Lazarus, can do little more than lay himſelf down at the door of mercy, unable to pronounce one articulate word; when, like the publican in the parable, he can only ſmite upon his breaſt, to point at the place where the diſtemper lies; the Holy Spirit puts language into theſe actions, which God perfectly underſtands, and graciouſly accepts; becauſe his *eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.*

4thly, This doctrine is no leſs awful to the wicked than it is comfortable to the ſincere and good. Where-ever they are, whatever they do, God ſees and obſerves them. Men are frequently induced to commit ſin by the hope of concealment: " The " eye of the adulterer waiteth for the twi- " light; ſaying, No eye ſhall ſee me; and " diſguiſeth his face." But this text diſcovers the folly of ſuch hopes: the Judge himſelf beholds and knows them; for " there is no darkneſs nor ſhadow of death " where the workers of iniquity can hide " themſelves from him." O ſinners, think of

of this: None of your ways are hid from the Lord: He not only knows what you do, but he alſo knows what oppoſition and reſtraint you overcome in doing it. You may feign excuſes to your neighbours, you may plead the violence of temptation, the want of recollection, or the ſtrength of paſſion; and by theſe alleviations extenuate your guilt, and put ſome ſort of colour upon your conduct: but God ſees through all theſe thin diſguiſes; he that heard every whiſpering of conſcience within thee; and the complaints of this oppreſſed ſubdued deputy are all recorded againſt thee.—Brethren, this is a moſt alarming conſideration: may God impreſs it upon our hearts, and give it that power and influence which it ought to have! This would humble us to purpoſe, and make us to loath ourſelves in our own ſight, becauſe of our abominations.

Surely the heart of man is with good reaſon ſaid to be "deceitful above all "things, and deſperately wicked." We are haſtening to the tribunal of that Judge, whoſe eye hath been conſtantly upon us,

and from whoſe ſentence there lies no appeal. No craft or policy can evade his juſtice, neither can any power deliver out of his hands: yet we live as if we had no witneſs, no judge, nor any cauſe of importance to be tried.——God hath aſſured us in his word, that " death is the wages " of ſin;" Reaſon condemns it; Conſcience either remonſtrates againſt it, or rebukes us for it:——yet, in defiance of all theſe, we hug it in our boſom, and refuſe to let it go.

This is ſuch perverſe, ſuch unaccountable folly, that were not the whole earth a bedlam, in which all have a tincture of the ſame diſeaſe, it would be regarded with equal ſurpriſe and horror. One of the moſt probable means for reſtoring men to their right ſenſes, is the ſerious belief of this important doctrine, that *the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.* Which leads me to obſerve, in the

5th and *laſt* place, That an habitual impreſſion of the divine preſence would prove at once an effectual reſtraint from all manner

ner of ſin, and the moſt powerful incitement to every part of our duty.

This would deter us even from the moſt ſecret ſins, and influence us as much in our cloſeſt retirement, as when we act in the public view of the world. Had we no other ſpectators than men, it might be ſufficient to maintain a fair outſide, becauſe that only falls under their obſervation: but there is no covering ſo thick as to hide us from God; the moſt ſecret deviation of the heart is ſubject to his cogniſance, as much as the moſt open tranſgreſſion of the life; and ſins committed in the deepeſt ſhades of darkneſs, are as perfectly known to him, as thoſe committed in the cleareſt noon-day. None of the ſprings from whence they proceed can eſcape his notice, nor the temper of mind with which they are done; which give the trueſt light into their nature, and determine the preciſe degree of their malignity. What reaſon, then, have we to keep our hearts, as well as our lives, with all diligence, and to dread a ſin in privacy, no leſs than when we know that many eyes are upon us?

With reſpect again to the practice of our duty, the influence of a realizing faith of the divine omniſcience is ſo apparent, that it needs no illuſtration. "I have kept thy "ſtatutes and thy teſtimonies," ſaid David; "for all my ways are before thee." Were God habitually preſent to our minds, we ſhould think nothing too much to be done, or too hard to be endured, in his ſervice. A holy ambition to approve ourſelves to him, by whoſe final ſentence we muſt ſtand or fall, would render us ſuperior to every trial, and carry us forward in the way of his commandments with increaſing vigour and alacrity: we ſhould never "think that "we had already attained, either were al- "ready perfect; but forgetting the things "which are behind, and reaching forth "to thoſe things which are before, we "ſhould preſs towards the mark for the "prize of the high calling of God in Chriſt "Jeſus."

Upon the whole, then, let us earneſtly pray God, that he, by his grace, may ſtrengthen our faith of this important truth, that *the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding*

holding the evil and the good: and enable us ſo to ſet him before us during all the days of our pilgrimage on earth, that hereafter we may be admitted into his immediate preſence; where, in the happy ſociety of angels and ſaints, we ſhall enjoy the unclouded light of his countenance without interruption and without end. *Amen.*

SER-

SERMON III.

PSALM xix. 13.

Keep back thy ſervant alſo from preſumptuous ſins.

MEMORABLE is that ſaying of the Apoſtle Paul, "I had not known ſin "but by the law." We can never judge aright of our temper and practice, till we prove them by this unerring rule. Many objects appear to have a ſtrong reſemblance while we view them apart, and at a diſtance from each other; which, in almoſt every feature, are found to diſagree when they are brought together and examined with accuracy. Thus there is a ſeeming conformity to the divine law, an image of ſanctity, which very often paſſeth for real holineſs, and leads men "to think of themſelves more highly than they ought to "think."——Paul "was alive without the "law

" law once; but when the commandment " came, ſin revived, and he died." So long as he knew only the letter of the law, and was a ſtranger to its ſpiritual meaning and juſt extent, he imagined that his prayers, his faſtings, and his alms, accompanied with ſome pieces of bodily exerciſe, and an abſtinence from the groſſer acts of ſin, were ſufficient to recommend him to the friendſhip of God, and would certainly intitle him to the joys of immortality: but " when the commandment came" in its native purity, and entered into his heart with light and power, he ſoon diſcovered his miſtake, and was convinced, that his ſeeming virtues were no more in reality than " dead works;" his phariſaical righteouſneſs a mere painted outſide, the deluſive picture or " form of godlineſs."

In like manner, the author of this Pſalm, after a devout contemplation of the divine law (which he had magnified in the foregoing verſes, by a juſt and animated detail of its amiable properties and ſalutary effects), turning his eyes inward, is ſtruck with a ſenſe of his own guilt and pollution:

" Who,"

" Who," ſaith he, " can underſtand his er-
" rors?"——Many indeed, too many, alas! I can ſoon recollect; for every period of my life hath been ſtained with ſin: but beſides all theſe, I now perceive, that in numberleſs inſtances, unobſerved or forgotten, I muſt have deviated from ſo perfect a rule. —Upon this he ſupplicates the mercy of God, and implores the forgiveneſs of thoſe " errors" or infirmities, which had either eſcaped his notice, or dropped out of his remembrance: " Cleanſe thou me from ſe-
" cret faults:" " ſecret," not only with reſpect to others, but to myſelf alſo; hid from mine own eyes, as well as from the eyes of my fellow-men. And under this awful impreſſion of the polluting nature even of his unobſerved and " ſecret faults," he views with horror the more aggravated guilt of known and wilful ſins; and prays with redoubled earneſtneſs, in the words of my text, that it might pleaſe God to reſtrain or keep him back from theſe:—*Keep back thy ſervant alſo from preſumptuous ſins.*

What theſe ſins are,—and how much it concerneth us all to avoid them,—I ſhall endeavour

deavour to ſhow in the ſequel of this diſcourſe:—And as my text is a prayer, I ſhall conclude with ſome directions for the help of thoſe who are willing to make it their own prayer, and wiſh to offer it up with acceptance and ſucceſs.

By *preſumptuous ſins* we are to underſtand ſomething different from thoſe unavoidable failings, on account of which it is ſaid, that "there is not a juſt man upon earth, "who doeth good, and ſinneth not." Perfection in holineſs is not the attainment of our preſent ſtate: the beſt offend in many things; and "if we ſay we have no ſin, we "deceive ourſelves, and the truth is not in "us."

There are ſome ſins done through ignorance; and this circumſtance, how great ſoever the offence may be in its own nature, doth certainly render the caſe of the offender more pitiable. We find "the Apoſtle "and High-prieſt of our profeſſion, Chriſt "Jeſus," pleading this argument for mercy to his murderers: "Father, forgive them; "for they know not what they do." St

"Paul

" Paul obtained mercy, who was before a " blaſphemer, a perſecutor, and injurious, " becauſe he did it ignorantly." And the Judge himſelf hath aſſured us, (*Luke* xii. 48.), that " the ſervant who knew not his " lord's will, and did commit things worthy " of ſtripes, ſhall be beaten with few ſtripes."

There are other ſins, into which men are hurried by ſudden and violent temptation, which the Apoſtle, writing to the Galatians, calls " being overtaken in a fault," *Galat.* vi. 1. outwitted, as it were, and taken by ſurpriſe. In this caſe, he exhorts the brethren, " to reſtore ſuch an one in the ſpirit of " meekneſs :" and the argument he uſeth is very remarkable ; " conſidering thyſelf, leſt " thou alſo be tempted." It farther deſerves our notice, that the perſons to whom the exhortation is addreſſed, are ſuppoſed to be " ſpiritual ;" yet even to theſe he recommends compaſſion and tenderneſs, becauſe the violence of the temptation might in like circumſtances have overcome themſelves. ——" Men do not deſpiſe a thief," ſaid the wiſe king of Iſrael, " if he ſteal to ſatiſ- " fy his ſoul when he is hungry." In eſtimating

mating the different degrees of guilt, regard muſt always be had to the nature of the temptation: for according to the ſtrength of that, the pride or perverſeneſs of the ſinner is proportionally diminiſhed; eſpecially if it appear that he did not go forth to meet the temptation, but was really *overtaken* by it, in the proper ſenſe of that word, and hurried along with its violence, before his mind could have freedom or leiſure to reflect and reaſon upon the matter.

Having premiſed theſe diſtinctions, we ſhall now be able to diſcover, with greater eaſe and certainty, thoſe peculiar ingredients which render ſin preſumptuous.

Knowledge is the firſt. This, as I have already hinted, muſt lie at the root of every preſumptuous ſin. —— He is rather unfortunate than faulty, who, by miſtake or accident, hurteth one in the dark; but he who doth it in broad day, and with his eyes open, betrays malevolence, or wicked intention, which doth not admit of any extenuation. It was this that rendered the unbelieving Jews altogether inexcuſable, according to that declaration of our Saviour,

John

John xv. 22. " If I had not come and ſpo-
" ken unto them, they had not had ſin;
" but now they have no cloak for their ſin."
Knowledge then being ſuppoſed as an eſſen-
tial ingredient,

The ſin becomes more preſumptuous when it is the fruit of deliberation and contrivance; when the perſon ruminates and plots, and lays ſchemes for executing his criminal deſigns. Such a tranſgreſſor is deſcribed, *Prov.* vi. 14. " Frowardneſs is
" in his heart, he deviſeth miſchief conti-
" nually;" and again, *Pſalm* xxxvi. 4. " He
" deviſeth miſchief upon his bed; he ſetteth
" himſelf in a way that is not good; he ab-
" horreth not evil."

The preſumption is farther heightened, when obſtinacy is added to knowledge and deliberation; when the tranſgreſſor " hold-
" eth faſt his iniquity, and will not let it
" go," but ruſheth forward in his wicked courſe, " even as the horſe ruſheth into the
" battle." Such was the temper which the Jews expreſſed in their anſwer to Jeremiah, (*Jerem.* xliv. 16.) " As for the word which
" thou haſt ſpoken to us in the name of the
" Lord

" Lord, we will not hearken unto thee, but " will certainly do whatſoever thing goeth " forth out of our own mouth." And to this obſtinacy the epithet of *preſumptuous* is directly applied, *Deuteron.* i. 43. where Moſes ſaith, " I ſpake unto you, but ye would " not hear, but rebelled againſt the com- " mandment of the Lord, and went pre- " ſumptuouſly up into the hill."

Again, if the warnings and reproofs of men be accompanied with the remonſtrances of conſcience, and enforced by the motions of the Holy Spirit, theſe give a yet deeper tincture to the ſinner's preſumption, and render his obſtinacy ſtill more criminal. With ſuch guilt were the Jewiſh rulers directly charged by the firſt martyr Stephen, *Acts* vii. 51. " Ye ſtiff-necked, and " uncircumciſed in heart and in ear, ye do " always reſiſt the Holy Ghoſt: as your fa- " thers did, ſo do ye."

But the ſin becomes preſumptuous in the higheſt degree, when, beſides the remonſtrances of conſcience, and the ſtrivings of the Holy Spirit, God, by ſome awful diſpenſations of his providence, " hedgeth up

" the ſinner's way as with thorns," and yet he will break through. Upon this account a diſtinguiſhed brand of infamy is ſet upon Ahaz in the ſacred hiſtory; of whom it is ſaid, 2 *Chron.* xxviii. 22. " In " the time of his diſtreſs did he treſpaſs yet " more againſt the Lord;" to which it is ſubjoined, with a peculiar emphaſis, " This " is that King Ahaz," that obſtinate, that incorrigible offender, who ſtands on record as an awful beacon, for a warning to all ſucceeding generations.——Theſe, I apprehend, are the principal ingredients which render ſin preſumptuous.

And from this deſcription it will appear, that there are ſome ſins which muſt always be preſumptuous, and do not admit of any palliation.

Profane ſwearing is evidently of this kind. It hath no claim to pleaſure, and as little to profit; the ſwearer ſeems to be wicked from pure malice, merely for the ſake of being wicked. In vain do men plead provocation: for injure them who will, ſurely God doth them no injury; and if a fellow-creature offend them, that can never

never afford a reaſon for affronting their Creator, who is continually doing them good. Beſides, it is only one inſtance of profane ſwearing for which even this alleviation can be pleaded: let the firſt act be ſuppoſed involuntary, the effect of ſome ſudden diſorder in the mind; what becomes of the next? that muſt neceſſarily be preſumptuous; for the repetition of ſo unnatural a ſin may eaſily be prevented, if the perſon hath a real abhorrence of it, and uſeth any efforts to guard againſt it. But, alas! how many are there who ſwear alike, whether they be angry or well pleaſed; who imprecate damnation upon themſelves out of mere wantonneſs, and make ſuch horrid oaths a principal part of their familiar converſation.——If any who hear me are guilty in this manner, let me prevail with them to pauſe for a little, till they have ſeriouſly conſidered what they are doing. It coſt the Redeemer much to purchaſe ſalvation for you, not only prayers, but blood too; and dare you pray that your ſouls may have no ſhare in it? This is the height of madneſs: Damna-

tion is eaſily obtained; you need not pray for it; if you apply not the remedy, you periſh of courſe: but it is not ſo eaſy to be ſaved; and muſt not theſe imprecations, which you have juſt cauſe to fear are recorded againſt you, increaſe the difficulty, and remove you farther from the road of mercy? Think of this, O ſinners! before it be too late, and ſpeedily forſake this preſumptuous ſin.

Perjury is ſtill more inexcuſable, as it cannot even borrow the pretext of paſſion or ſurpriſe, but is a cool deliberate act of the moſt daring impiety. The perſon who ſwears in judgement has not only abundance of leiſure to conſider what he is about to ſay, but the very manner of adminiſtering an oath in all the courts I know, has ſomething in it peculiarly ſolemn and awful, on purpoſe, no doubt, to ſtir up conſcience to perform its office, and to oblige it to be faithful. Nay, the very words of an oath in judgement, expreſs an immediate appeal to the Searcher of hearts in the tremendous character of final Judge; and conſequently imply, not only the perſon's

ſon's conſent to accept damnation as the puniſhment of his falſehood, if he ſhall conceal or deny what he knows to be the truth, but even a formal and ſolemn adjuration of God to inflict damnation upon him; which is the higheſt degree of preſumption that can poſſibly be imagined. ——But though perjury be a *lie* with peculiar aggravations; yet there can be no *lies* of whatever kind, which are not preſumptuous in one degree or other, inaſmuch as they always require ſome exerciſe of invention to make them, and uſually a great deal more to ſupport their credit, and to keep them in countenance after they are made.

Theft muſt in every caſe be preſumptuous: it is a work of time, which requires much thought and cunning to adjuſt the plan of operation, and no leſs addreſs and conduct in carrying it into execution. Beſides, the thief has many reſtraints to break through, not only the inward conviction of the wrong done to his neighbour, but the fears of a diſcovery likewiſe, and of that

diſgrace and puniſhment with which it will certainly be attended.

The ſame may be ſaid of "*whoremongers and adulterers, whom God will judge.*" For though ſuch tranſgreſſors commonly plead the violence of temptation; yet, as I have already obſerved, this by itſelf cannot excuſe from preſumption, unleſs the temptation be ſo ſudden and ſurpriſing, that it gives the perſon no leiſure to exerciſe his reaſon; which I am perſuaded is ſeldom or never the caſe. Theſe works of darkneſs are uſually gone about with greater caution and ſecrecy than are conſiſtent with mere paſſion; ſo that Reaſon hath been employed, though in a wrong way: and this is one of thoſe ingredients that render ſin preſumptuous.

We may likewiſe ſay of *drunkenneſs*, that in moſt caſes it is preſumptuous. It is an exceſs which one can ſcarcely be ſurpriſed into, unleſs the liquor be mixed with ſome pernicious drug, or hath ſome peculiar quality with which he is utterly unacquainted. But this, I ſuppoſe, is a caſe that rarely happens. It uſually takes ſome time

time before a perſon be intoxicated; and drunkenneſs comes on by ſuch gradual advances, that one hath ſufficient opportunity to obſerve its approach, and to make his eſcape, if he is not otherwiſe determined.

So that all theſe ſins are evidently preſumptuous; and as they are too commonly practiſed among us, I thought it my duty to mention them in particular, for the ſake of thoſe who know themſelves to be guilty, that they may not waſte their precious time in ſeeking after excuſes to defend them againſt the heavy charge of preſumption; but may, without a moment's delay, humble themſelves in the preſence of that God whom they have ſo grievouſly offended, imploring his pardoning mercy for what is paſt, and his powerful grace to reſtrain them for the future.

THE great importance of his reſtraint to us all, or how much it concerneth us to be kept back from every preſumptuous ſin, was the ſecond thing I propoſed to illuſtrate. And this will appear from two conſiderations.

1ſt, That ſuch ſins are moſt heinous in

their nature; and, 2*dly*, moſt pernicious in their effects and conſequences.

1*ſt*, They are moſt heinous in their nature. The language of the proud ſinner is, Who is Lord over me? He either diſowns the authority of God, or bids him defiance, and provokes him to jealouſy, as if he were ſtronger than he. Thus it is written, *Numbers* xv. 3. "The ſoul that "doeth ought preſumptuouſly, reproach-"eth the Lord:" reproacheth his knowledge, as if God was ignorant of his wickedneſs; or his juſtice and truth, as if he would not puniſh it; or his power, as if he could not. And what horrid impiety is this!——O ſinners, think of it: your known wilful ſins cannot poſſibly be vindicated from this charge: all I have now ſaid, and a great deal more, ſhall be made good againſt you at laſt, when God ſhall enter into judgement with your ſouls.—— It is vain for you to plead, that you do not directly intend theſe things. I verily believe you think ſo; for, proud and ſtubborn as you are, I am confident that you dare not utter ſuch blaſphemies before God, nor

nor even avow them to your own hearts. But doth it follow from thence, that you are not chargeable with them? The fallacy of this reaſoning can eaſily be detected.——Tell us, do you intend your own damnation?——I need not wait for an anſwer; I am ſure you do not. Pray, then, what meaning have you at all?———You wilfully tranſgreſs the laws of God, but you do not intend to be puniſhed for it; on the contrary, you ſhudder at the proſpect of ſuffering, and would certainly oppoſe it with all your might. This is one ſide. ——On the other hand, you ſay, that you have no direct intention to injure or inſult the majeſty of God; you mean no prejudice to his authority, nor to any of his perfections, his wiſdom, holineſs, juſtice, or almighty power.———Can any body reconcile theſe two oppoſites?———You are unwilling to be miſerable; and yet you are willing that God ſhould poſſeſs thoſe tremendous attributes, by the exerciſe of which you muſt be made miſerable. This is a flat contradiction.—The caſe is plain, whether you perceive it or not: you would certainly

dethrone

dethrone God if you could; you would reverſe his laws, or diſarm his power, that you might follow your inclinations without fear or controul: And this is the diſpoſition of every preſumptuous ſinner, though perhaps his heart may be ſo hard and unfeeling as not to perceive it. Theſe remarks may ſuffice to ſhow, of what a heinous nature preſumptuous ſins are.——I added, in the

2*d* place, That they are likewiſe moſt pernicious in their effects and conſequences.

Every wilful ſin hardens the heart, and renders it leſs penetrable than it was before: one conviction overcome, makes way for the conqueſt of another, and that of a third, and ſo on; the ſinner by degrees waxeth ſtout againſt God, till at length every bond that ſhould reſtrain him is broken aſunder, and his heart becomes "fully ſet in him "to do evil." This is the natural effect of preſumptuous ſinning: conſcience being often violated, grows callous and inſenſible, or, in the language of ſcripture, "ſeared "as with a hot iron;" ſo that it not only loſeth

loſeth its authority, but in great meaſure its feeling alſo, and ſuffers the ſinner to ruſh forward in his wicked courſe without check or remorſe.

But this is not all: Theſe preſumptuous ſins have not only a hardening influence upon the heart, but they likewiſe provoke God to inflict a judicial hardneſs upon it, which of all his judgements is by far the moſt terrible; for this, as it were, ſeals up the ſinner to final condemnation, and renders his recovery not only difficult, but utterly impoſſible. "Ephraim is joined to his "idols," ſaith God; "let him alone:" he is obſtinately bent upon idolatry, give him no diſturbance. By this awful ſentence God lays an inhibition, if I may ſo ſpeak, upon every thing that might either reſtrain or reclaim the offender; he withdraws his deſpiſed grace, and ſuffers him to wallow in that filthineſs he hath choſen, till the fire that is not quenched ſhall awaken him to a fruitleſs deſpairing conviction of his folly.

But as this judgement is, in a peculiar manner, "God's ſtrange work," to which he

he never proceeds till all reclaiming methods have been tried and baffled, let us ſuppoſe, if you pleaſe, that the ſinner begins to awaken out of his lethargy; yet how diſmal muſt the effects of his preſumptuous ſins be, even in this caſe? Oh! what horror will the remembrance of them raiſe in his mind? How will they diſcourage him in his addreſſes for mercy, to that God whom he hath ſo impudently affronted and defied to his face? How will they damp his expectations of pardon, when God ſets them all in battle-array before him, and conſcience takes hold of that dreadful ſentence againſt the preſumptuous tranſgreſſor, (*Numbers* xv. 31.) "Becauſe he hath deſpiſed "the word of the Lord, and hath broken "his commandment; that ſoul ſhall be ut-"terly cut off: his iniquity ſhall be upon "him?" If ſo good a man as Heman was obliged to cry out, "While I ſuffer thy ter-"rors I am diſtracted;" what muſt be the condition of the newly awakened preſumptuous ſinner?

Nay, let us ſuppoſe, that God hath ſpoken peace to his ſoul, and given him reaſon

ſon to hope that his iniquities are forgiven; yet theſe ſins of preſumption always leave behind them the ſcars of thoſe gaſhes which they made upon the heart: and as deep bodily wounds, even after they have been cloſed, are apt to ache upon a change of weather; ſo any variation in the perſon's lot that is capable of being conſtrued into a token of God's anger, will recall to his memory thoſe pardoned iniquities, and make them a freſh occaſion of grief and anguiſh to his doubting perplexed ſoul.

Beſides, though pardon ſecures againſt final condemnation, yet ſins of this kind are ſeldom remitted without ſome viſible teſtimony of God's diſpleaſure. What calamities befel the author of this Pſalm, even after the Prophet had intimated to him, that "the Lord had put away his ſin?" His daughter raviſhed;——the inceſtuous brother ſlain;——Abſalom invades both his throne and his bed;——the bulk of his ſubjects deſert him;——and he himſelf, accompanied with a few remaining friends, is driven into the wilderneſs, and hard put

to

to it to ſhift for his life. And though Dávid was chargeable with many failings, and ſome of them groſs enough, yet in the character which the inſpired hiſtorian hath given of him, they are all paſſed over in ſilence, except his complicated guilt in the matter of Uriah: but that is expreſsly mentioned, and left as a blot upon the name of this great and good man, to deter others from ſuch deliberate and preſumptuous ſins; for thus it is written, (1 *Kings* xv. 5.) "David did that which was right in the "eyes of the Lord, and turned not aſide "from any thing that he commanded him "all the days of his life, *ſave only in the* "*matter of Uriah the Hittite.*"—Nay, David with his own hand hath recorded his guilt in the 51ſt *Pſalm*, where to this day he profeſſes his ſhame and ſorrow, and will continue to do ſo as long as God ſhall have a church upon earth.——When theſe things are attended to, the importance of being kept back from preſumptuous ſins muſt appear to us in the ſtrongeſt and moſt affecting light.

Let me now addreſs thoſe whoſe conſciences

ſciences bear witneſs, that they have often tranſgreſſed in this manner, and are living perhaps at this very time in the habitual indulgence of ſome preſumptuous ſin. Have you ſeriouſly conſidered the danger you are expoſed to? David's caſe, which I juſt now mentioned, ſuggeſts to me one argument that may poſſibly have weight with you. Some of you, perhaps, are ſly offenders; ſo cunning in your way, that the world hath not found you out. But, ſay, would it not give you pain to think, that one day you ſhould be diſcovered?——— Now, what aſſurance have you that this ſhall never happen? David, I ſuppoſe, conducted his criminal purſuit with as much addreſs and ſecrecy as you can do; and after it had lain buried for the ſpace of nine months, I am perſuaded he was as fearleſs of a diſcovery as you preſently are: yet God detected him in an extraordinary manner, and not only made his ſin viſible in his puniſhment, but even obliged him, as you have heard, by a ſolemn exerciſe of repentance, which is left upon record for the uſe of the church, to

publiſh

publiſh his confeſſion of it to all ſucceeding generations. — Have you no apprehenſion that ſomething of a ſimilar kind may befal yourſelves? Cannot God diſcloſe your ſecret ſins if he pleaſeth? And have you not cauſe to fear that he will do it, from what he ſaid to David: "Thou didſt it "ſecretly; but I will do this thing before "all Iſrael, and before the ſun?"——Will God ſhow greater tenderneſs to your reputation than to that of the man according to his own heart? May he not, in his righteous diſpleaſure, permit that luſt, which you preſumptuouſly cheriſh in your boſom, to grow ſo ſtrong, that all your cunning ſhall not be able to keep it within bounds? and then it will fly abroad, and become public of courſe.——I beg you may attend to this: I confeſs it is a motive of the loweſt kind; but low as it is, you ought at leaſt to take its aid, till you get a reliſh for others of a more ingenuous and ſpiritual nature.

Conſider, farther, what inward torment you muſt one day feel: at preſent, perhaps, conſcience is aſleep; but it ſhall not always

always ſleep; affliction may awaken it; the approach of death moſt probably will; and then "ſhall your fear come as deſo-"lation, and your deſtruction as a whirl-"wind: diſtreſs and anguiſh ſhall then "come upon you;" for in that awful ſea-ſon, "the Lord ſhall give thee a trembling "heart, and failing of eyes, and ſorrow "of mind. And thy life ſhall hang in "doubt before thee, and thou ſhalt fear day "and night, and ſhalt have none aſſurance "of thy life. In the morning thou ſhalt "ſay, Would God it were even; and at "even thou ſhalt ſay, Would God it were "morning, for the fear of thine heart "wherewith thou ſhalt fear, and for the "ſight of thine eyes which thou ſhalt ſee." ——Or if this ſeem not miſery enough, look forward a little farther to the tremendous iſſue: "Who can dwell with devour-"ing flames? who can lie down in ever-"laſting burnings?" Yet this, O ſinners, muſt be your portion, if you live and die in rebellion againſt God. The ſweetneſs of ſin paſſeth quickly away, but the ſting of it is perpetual: the gnawing worm ſhall never

die, the fire of God's wrath ſhall never be extinguiſhed.

It is really aſtoniſhing, that creatures endued with reaſon, and capable of exerciſing reflection and foreſight, ſhould, in ſuch a ſituation, enjoy any ſort of peace for a moment. What is it that ſupports you?—Do you imagine that God will overlook your rebellion, and never call you to an account for your conduct? Hear his own words by the mouth of his Prophets: "I "will ſearch Jeruſalem with candles, and "puniſh the men that are ſettled on their "lees; that ſay in their heart, The Lord "will not do good, neither will he do "evil." *Zephaniah* i. 12.———And again, "Wo unto them that draw iniquity with "cords of vanity, and ſin as it were with a "cart-rope: that ſay, Let him make ſpeed, "and haſten his work, that we may ſee "it; and let the counſel of the holy One "of Iſrael draw nigh and come, that we "may know it." *Iſaiah* v. 18. Has he not already, in the courſe of his providence, given ſufficient evidence of his hatred of ſin; and by many awful tokens of his

his righteous diſpleaſure, extorted a confeſſion from the moſt obſtinate ſinners, "that verily there is a God that judgeth "in the earth?"——But you have a proof of this in your own boſom.—What means the voice of conſcience within you? Whence that fear and horror which ſometimes ſeize upon you? Surely theſe painful feelings are involuntary; for no man chooſeth to be his own tormentor.———Well, then, this internal ſenſe is in place of a thouſand witneſſes, to prove, that God is marking your ſteps in the mean time, and that ere long he will puniſh you for all your iniquities; "for according to this fear, ſo is "the wrath of God," which is the object of it.

Do you preſume upon the mercy of God? Liſten to that awful declaration in the book of Deuteronomy, chap. xxix. 19, 20. "If "it come to paſs, when he heareth the "words of this curſe, that he bleſs himſelf "in his heart, and ſay, I ſhall have peace, "though I walk in the imagination of my "heart: the Lord will not ſpare him, but "the anger of the Lord, and his jealouſy,

" ſhall ſmoke againſt that man, and all the " curſes that are written in the book of the " law ſhall be upon him."——True, God is merciful; but is it not equally true, that he is holy and righteous? Can you deviſe a more lofty deſcription of the divine goodneſs, than that which was publiſhed by God himſelf, when, deſcending in a cloud upon mount Sinai, he paſſed by before Moſes, and proclaimed his name, " the Lord, " the Lord God, merciful and gracious, " long-ſuffering, and abundant in good- " neſs and truth, keeping mercy for thou- " ſands, forgiving iniquity, and tranſgreſ- " ſion, and ſin;" (but obſerve what follows), " and that will by no means clear " the guilty?" *Exod.* xxxiv. 6. 7. Nay, the moſt amazing inſtance of divine love, to wit, God's ſending his Son into the world to die for ſinners, is, at the ſame time, the moſt awful proof of his inflexible juſtice, and of his irreconcileable hatred of ſin; ſeeing no leſs a ſacrifice could expiate the guilt of it than the blood of him by whom all things were made. Neither ſhall this coſtly ſacrifice avail us, if we ſtill continue

to

to hold fast our iniquities: for "the Son "of God was manifested for this very pur- "pose, that he might destroy the works of "the devil." And in vain do we plead the merit of his death, unless we follow the example of his life, and submit to the government of his laws and Spirit; for "he is the "author of eternal salvation only to them "that obey him."

But it may be, you hope to make all up by repentance; and though at present there are some sins you are unwilling to part with, yet you propose to do it afterwards, with a resolution never to return any more to folly. Well, sinners, this at least is a plain confession that you are self-condemned creatures in the mean time. You admit that repentance is necessary, and that you are undone without it.———And now let me display to you the folly of your conduct.———Should you die this night, what would become of you? and what assurance have you that you shall be alive to-morrow? Were not Zimri and Cosbi cut off in the act of sin? and have not many others been carried off by a sudden death,

without leiſure afforded them to cry for mercy? Your ſin, and conſequently your miſery, is preſent and certain: your repentance only future, and therefore altogether uncertain; for who knoweth what a day may bring forth?———Beſides, is it not egregious folly to do that deliberately which needeth repentance? Would he not be juſtly accounted mad, who ſhould drink a deadly poiſon, merely to try the ſtrength of an antidote?——Though you could repent at pleaſure, and had a leaſe of life to any term of your own chooſing, which you well know you have not; yet, even upon this ſuppoſition, your conduct would be fooliſh and irrational. But I have ſomething to add that is ſtill more alarming. Repentance is the gift of God; it is a grace that can only be produced in your hearts by that divine Spirit, whom now you grieve: And is grieving him the way to obtain his aſſiſtance? muſt God wait your time, and patiently endure all your affronts, and then beſtow upon you a pure favour, to which you can plead no title, whenever you ſhall deign to aſk it? No,

ſinners.

ſinners.———There are ſuch awful words in your Bibles as theſe: "My Spirit ſhall "not always ſtrive with man;" and, "Be- "cauſe when I called, ye refuſed; when I "ſtretched out my hand, ye did not regard "me; therefore will I laugh at your ca- "lamity, and mock when your fear co- "meth." Go, think upon theſe, and get you to your knees, and beg of God, for Chriſt's ſake, that he may pardon what is paſt, and reſtrain you from ſuch preſumptuous ſins for the future. This brings me to the

LAST thing I propoſed; which was, to direct you how to put up this prayer to God, *Keep back thy ſervant from preſumptuous ſins.*

In the *1ſt* place, You muſt do it ſincerely, with an unfeigned and earneſt deſire, that God may hear and grant your requeſt. We are very apt to impoſe upon ourſelves in this matter. Conſcience being galled and irritated by preſumptuous ſins, may grow ſo turbulent and clamorous, that ſomething muſt be done to ſtill and pacify

it. By this means, we may be forced into the cloſet, and obliged to uſe the words of my text; nay, to apply them to thoſe particular ſins for which conſcience upbraideth us. But, alas! our prayers are oft-times falſe and hypocritical; we hate not the ſin, but the remorſe that follows it; and we wiſh not ſo much to be delivered from the ſin, as from the fierce challenges of the awful reprover within us.——Have you not diſcovered ſomething of this hypocriſy in the time of praying? Have you not felt a ſecret love to the ſin you profeſſed to renounce; nay, ſome degrees of fear leſt God ſhould take you at your word, and render that ſin bitter and unpleaſant to you? Need I tell you, that ſuch prayers are an abomination to the Lord, and inſtead of diminiſhing, aggravate your guilt? To pray, is not to offer up words, but deſires, to God: I therefore ſaid, that in uſing this petition, you muſt do it with a ſincere and earneſt deſire, that God may hear and grant your requeſt. It was for this purpoſe I ſet before you the heinous nature and fatal effects of preſumptuous ſins,

that

that you might view them as deadly foes, and long to be reſcued from their tyranny; for till your hearts are brought to this, in vain do you utter the words of David; your prayers are hollow and inſincere, whatever dreſs you put them into; and are themſelves more preſumptuous than any of thoſe ſins againſt which you pretend to uſe them.

2*dly*, We muſt put up this requeſt, from a humble ſenſe of our own weakneſs, with a lively hope of the mercy of God, and a ſtedfaſt reliance upon the efficacy of his grace. Theſe qualifications are abſolutely neceſſary: for till we feel our inability to overcome our impetuous and headſtrong paſſions, we ſhall not be very importunate with God to reſtrain them; and we ſhall ſoon grow weary in our addreſſes to him for aid, if we either call in queſtion his good-will to beſtow it, or doubt of its ſufficiency to anſwer our neceſſities. We muſt neither pray proudly nor deſpairingly; we affront God equally both ways. If we go to him merely in a complimental way, as if we did him honour by aſking

ſome

ſome ſlender aſſiſtance only to render the conqueſt more eaſy; this may provoke him to leave us in the hands of our enemies, till, by ſome fatal overthrow, we are brought to a thorough conviction of our impotence; for "he reſiſteth the proud, and "giveth grace only to the humble: the "hungry are filled with good things, but "the rich are ſent empty away."

On the other hand, ſhould we either queſtion his willingneſs or ability to help us, would not this be to caſt upon him vile diſhonour, after all the illuſtrious proofs he hath given us, both of his love and ſaving power? "He that ſpared not his own "Son, but delivered him up for us all; "how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give "us all things?"

Let us therefore, under a deep ſenſe of our depravity and weakneſs, humbly and importunately cry to God, that he may deliver us from the oppreſſion of our tyrannical luſts; and theſe cries of the oppreſſed ſhall "enter into the ears of the "Lord of Sabaoth."——At the ſame time, let us harbour no diſhonourable ſuſpicions either

either of his mercy, or of his power:—— "We have a great High-prieſt, who is paſ- "ſed into the heavens, Jeſus the Son of "God, who now appears in the preſence "of God for us. Having therefore bold- "neſs to enter into the holieſt by the blood "of Jeſus, by a new and living way, which "he hath conſecrated for us through the "vail, that is to ſay, his fleſh; and having "a High-prieſt who is touched with the feel- "ing of our infirmities, and was in all "points tempted like as we are; let us come "boldly to the throne of grace, that we "may obtain mercy, and find grace to help "in time of need."

If we thus aſk, we ſhall certainly receive: The great Captain of our ſalvation, whoſe grace is ſufficient for all his people, will not only keep us back from preſumptuous ſins, but in due time he will bruiſe Satan underneath our feet, and "grant unto us "to ſit with him in his throne, even as he "alſo overcame, and is ſet down with the "Father in his throne." —— Let me only add, in the

Third and *laſt* place, That our prayers to God

God for reſtraining grace, muſt be accompanied with our own moſt vigorous efforts to reſiſt all temptations to preſumptuous ſins, otherwiſe they ſhall not be accepted.

God will ſo do his work, as that we ſhall do ours likewiſe; for "God's working in "us to will and do," inſtead of ſuperſeding the neceſſity of our own endeavours, is urged in ſcripture as a motive and encouragement, to make us "work out our "own ſalvation with fear and trembling." Prayer is not only an acknowledgement of our dependence upon God for the things we aſk, but it likewiſe imports a reſolution on our part, to uſe all proper means for obtaining them; and the vigour of our endeavours is the beſt proof of our ſincerity. Should a perſon who is juſt now praying, "Lead me not into temptation," riſe immediately from his knees, and go forth to invite, or even to meet a temptation, who could believe that ſuch a man was in earneſt? Let us be doing, and then we may, with greater confidence, both aſk the divine aid, and hope to obtain it. If, in a humble dependence upon God, we faithfully

fully employ the ſtrength we have, more ſhall be added to us as our neceſſities require: "For to him that hath ſhall be gi-
" ven. —— They that wait upon the Lord
" ſhall renew their ſtrength, they ſhall
" mount up with wings as eagles, they ſhall
" run and not be weary, they ſhall walk
" and not faint. ——Wait therefore on the
" Lord: be of good courage, and he ſhall
" ſtrengthen thine heart: wait, I ſay, on the
" Lord." *Amen.*

SER-

SERMON IV.

2 TIMOTHY iii. 5.

Having a form of Godlineſs, but denying the power thereof.

"THE ſacrifice of the wicked is an "abomination to the Lord; but the "prayer of the upright is his delight." It is the heart of the worſhipper which God principally regards; if that be wrong, external homage is only "vain oblation," which can never aſcend to his throne with acceptance. Happy were it for us, had we a juſt impreſſion of this intereſting truth; but many, alas! are too apt to impoſe upon themſelves. Inſtead of aſpiring to that inward purity which is neceſſary to qualify them for communion with God, they ſeem to have no higher aim, than to lull conſcience aſleep by the practice of ſome cheap

cheap and common duties, leſt its galling reproofs ſhould alarm their fears, and anticipate the horrors of approaching judgement. Thus they dream of ſafety, when deſtruction is faſt coming upon them; and, with " untempered mortar," rear up for themſelves " a refuge of lies," which, ere long, ſhall be tumbled down, and bury them in its ruins.——For awakening ſuch perſons from their fatal ſecurity, I have choſen this paſſage of Holy Scripture, wherein the Apoſtle gives us a part of the character of deceiving hypocrites, or rather, indeed, a comprehenſive deſcription of them in few words: They *have a form of godlineſs, but deny the power thereof.* Their religion is a mere carcaſs, a body without the ſoul, a lifeleſs picture or image of godlineſs: they aſſume the garb and air of ſanctity, but are ſtrangers, nay, enemies, to the thing itſelf.——That the following diſcourſe may be " profitable for doctrine, " for reproof, for correction, and for in- " ſtruction in righteouſneſs," I ſhall, in the

Firſt place, Endeavour to open the nature of

of true *godlineſs*, and to ſhow wherein the life and *power* of it conſiſt.

Secondly, I ſhall enquire, whence it is, that any who *deny the power of godlineſs* ſhould ſubmit to the drudgery of practiſing the *forms* of it?—and then point out the improvement which both ſaints and ſinners ought to make of this ſubject.

GODLINESS, in general, is the ſubjection or devotedneſs of the ſoul to God himſelf. It is the practical acknowledgement of his unlimited ſovereignty, and the unreſerved dedication of the whole man to his ſervice; or, to ſpeak in the emphatical language of this Apoſtle, it is "Chriſt formed" in the heart, by the powerful energy of the Holy Spirit: in conſequence whereof, the perſon becomes "a new creature," both with regard to his temper and practice; "he par-"takes of the divine nature;" and "thoſe "members" which were formerly the "ſer-"vants of ſin," are now employed as "in-"ſtruments of righteouſneſs unto God."

It is not a cold aſſent to the truths of religion; it is not a natural ſoftneſs and benevolence

volence of temper; it is not the abſtaining from groſs ſins, or the giving to God a corner of our hearts, and ſome vacant portions of our time, while the bulk of both is alienated from him,—that will intitle us to the character of godly men.——As he *only* is God, who is univerſal Lord, ſupreme in wiſdom, in power, and in goodneſs; ſo that *only* is godlineſs which reveres and honours God, in a way ſuited to that high and incommunicable character.—Genuine piety expreſſeth itſelf thus: "Whom have I "in heaven but thee, O Lord? there is "none upon earth that I deſire beſides thee." We are not *godly*, whatever we profeſs or ſeem, if, in our moſt deliberate and affectionate choice, we do not prefer the one true God, and the enjoyment of his favour, to all that can be found throughout the wide extent of his works; if we make not his will the meaſure of ours, his law the ſovereign guide of our conduct, and his glory the ultimate end of our obedience. But more particularly, in the

Firſt place, *Godlineſs* includes a ſupreme love to God himſelf, and a conſtant prevail-

ing desire to please him, mixed with a holy reverential awe, or fear of offending him. I have joined these together, because they appear to be of equal necessity and use, to constitute that frame and temper of mind wherein the essence of piety or true *godliness* doth consist.——Fear is necessary to keep God in our eye: it is the office of love to enthrone him in our heart.——Fear cautiously avoids whatever may offend: love yields a prompt and liberal service.——Fear regards God as a witness and judge: love cleaves to him as a friend, nay a father.—Fear maketh us watchful and circumspect: love renders us active and resolute.——In short, they go hand in hand, and mutually assist each other: Love keeps fear from being servile and distrustful; and fear keeps love from being forward and secure: and both spring from one root, namely, Faith in God, as a being possessed of infinite perfection, and related to us as our Creator and Governor, our Redeemer, and our Judge.

This distinguisheth true *godliness* from every counterfeit, or false appearance of it. ——The seeming religiousness of the *formalist*,

maliſt, is either aſſumed to impoſe upon the world, without any regard to God at all, or elſe it flows entirely from a tormenting fear of future wrath: in his heart there is an averſion from God and his ſervice, at the very time he is profeſſing to honour him with his body; reluctant, and heſitating at every ſtep, he proceeds no farther in the road of duty, than he thinks may ſuffice to eſcape damnation: he doth more than he would do, were he not forced by neceſſity; and if left to his own choice, he would rather live at large like the beaſts that periſh, and render no homage to God at all.

Secondly, The power of godlineſs conſiſts in the conqueſt of our corrupt and rebellious paſſions. Theſe indeed ſtill live and fight within us; and will continue to do ſo, in one degree or other, till death pull down theſe earthly tabernacles: but if we are truly ſanctified, their ſtrength ſhall gradually languiſh and decay: victory is ſown in that new nature we have got; for "whatſoever is born of God overcometh "the world:——Jeſus our Lord ſhall ere

" long deliver us from the body of this " death, and the God of peace ſhall in due " time bruiſe Satan underneath our feet." ———Whereas the formaliſt is altogether carnal; corruption prevails againſt reaſon and conſcience; the fleſh gives law; and every faculty of the mind, every member of the body, is a willing ſlave to its uſurped authority.——Perhaps he has cunning enough " to waſh the outſide;" to refrain from thoſe ſins which would ſtain his reputation, and render him contemptible in the opinion of the world: But all the while he feels no hatred of ſin in his heart; his conformity to the law doth not flow from an inward principle of holineſs, but is purely an artificial thing, calculated to pleaſe others; and he cares for no more of it than is abſolutely neceſſary for attaining that end.

Thirdly, The power of godlineſs ennobles the ſoul with a holy indifference to all earthly things. The godly man is one whoſe treaſure is in heaven: he hath ſeen through the deceit and vanity of this world, and therefore eſteems it but droſs and

and dung in compariſon of God, and things eternal: he is haſtening to the promiſed land of reſt, and will not eagerly contend for an inheritance in this wilderneſs, nor be greatly dejected when it is either with-held or taken from him. Faith hath ſo far annihilated this world, that it is become as nothing in his eye, and hath no bribe to offer, that is ſufficient to ſeduce him from the ſervice of his God, or the care of his precious and immortal ſoul. This holy indifference to earthly things, this divine elevation of ſentiment and affection, is an eminent part of the godly man's character, and one of the moſt ſtriking effects of the power of religion in his heart.———The *formaliſt* may, no doubt, put on the appearance of this, he, too, may talk of his contempt of the world: but when a trying time comes, his hypocriſy and earthly-mindedneſs will ſoon diſcover themſelves: "Demas hath forſaken "me, (ſaid Paul), having loved this pre-"ſent world." Affliction, and eſpecially perſecution for the ſake of Chriſt, makes a wide and viſible diſtinction betwixt the

truth of grace, and all the counterfeits of it. This is a teſt which the formaliſt cannot ſtand: the predominant intereſt muſt then appear, and can no longer be concealed. In that day, all mere ſpeculations about religion vaniſh; nor can any thing ſupport the ſufferer but what he firmly believes and feels in his heart. The unſound profeſſor may look big for a while, and part with many leſſer things: but when matters are brought to this criſis, "Sell all "that thou haſt, and take up the croſs;" renounce every preſent ſenſible enjoyment for the ſake of diſtant inviſible bleſſings; then he muſt throw aſide the maſk, and confeſs that the world is ſupreme in his heart, and that heaven was never valued by him but as a ſecondary good, which he wiſhed to have in reverſion, when he could keep his hold of this earth no longer.

Fourthly, The ſoul that is under the power of godlineſs hath a vehement thirſt after the enjoyment of God himſelf. It is God in Chriſt whom the godly man ſeeketh in the ordinances of religion; either to know more of his will, or to have nearer com-

communion with him, or to receive from him freſh ſupplies of grace, for cleanſing and quickening and comforting his ſoul. Theſe are to him like the tree into which Zaccheus climbed up that he might ſee Jeſus: and he uſeth them only for that end. Doth he go to the ſanctuary? it is, "that "he may behold the beauty of the Lord, "and inquire in his temple." Doth he approach the altar? it is, that he may meet with "God his exceeding joy." "As the "hart panteth for the brooks of water, ſo "pants his thirſty longing ſoul for God, "even the living God;" and he always prefers "the light of his countenance" to the greateſt increaſe "of corn and of wine," or whatever elſe this earth can afford.—— Now the formaliſt is an utter ſtranger to theſe exerciſes of the heart: he feels no anxiety after communion with God: he prays, but never troubles himſelf with inquiring if his prayer is accepted: he goes to church, not that he may wait upon God, or receive ſpiritual nouriſhment from the word preached; but merely to gratify his curioſity, and to get ſome addition to his

ſtock of notional religion: he grows weary of the neceſſary bread of life: he loaths that dry manna, and reckons every Sabbath and ſermon loſt, in which he is not amuſed with variety and change. In ſhort, he looks upon the duties of religious worſhip merely as a taſk impoſed upon him by an arbitrary maſter, who is too ſtrong for him to contend with; and therefore he performs them for his own ſafety, and is always glad when they are over, and thinks that God hath nothing more to require at his hand.

Once more, in the *fifth* place, The power of godlineſs is manifeſted by a ſtedfaſt courſe of holy living, by an uniform and unreſerved obedience to all God's commandments. I obſerved, in the entrance, that godlineſs is the ſubjection or devotedneſs of the ſoul to God himſelf: and in vain do we pretend to this, if we object againſt any of his laws; for the Apoſtle James hath aſſured us, that "whoſoever "ſhall keep the whole law, and yet offend "in one point, he is guilty of all."——"It "is not the calling Chriſt Lord, Lord, but "the doing the things which he ſays," that proveth

proveth us to be Chriſtians indeed: "Yea, "in this the children of God are manifeſt, "and the children of the devil. He that "doeth not righteouſneſs, is not of God." ——The formaliſt, as I have already admitted, may go a conſiderable length in an outward reformation of manners; he may abſtain from pollutions of the groſſer kind, and even do many things that are materially good: but ſtill he hath his exceptions: ſome ſins are ſo dear to him, that he will by no means conſent to part with them; and ſome duties are ſo diſpleaſing to the fleſh, that he cannot be reconciled to them at any rate: he therefore endeavours, either to ſuit his opinion to his inclination, by perſuading himſelf that they are no duties; or, if the evidence of their authority is too ſtrong to be evaded, he may attempt to do ſomething like them in a cold and ſuperficial manner; but the things themſelves he will not do.——Whereas the godly man "eſteems all God's commandments con- "cerning all things to be right, and hates, "with a perfect hatred, every falſe and "wicked way." This is the habitual lan-

guage

guage of his ſoul: "O that my ways were "directed to keep thy ſtatutes! —— Show "me thy way, O Lord, teach me thy path, "lead me in thy truth, and teach me; for "thou art the God of my ſalvation; on thee "do I wait all the day.——What I know "not, teach thou me: If I have done ini-"quity, I will do ſo no more.—— Let the "words of my mouth, and the meditations "of my heart, be acceptable in thy ſight, "O Lord, my ſtrength, and my Redeemer." —"His delight is in the law of his God;" and inſtead of complaining, that the duties required of him are many or burthenſome, he rather rejoices, that he is furniſhed with ſuch a variety of means and occaſions of teſtifying his gratitude to that amiable Sovereign, to whom he hath devoted himſelf, and his all: Love makes the Redeemer's yoke to feel eaſy, and his burden light; and nothing grieves him ſo much, as that he cannot do all that he would, in acknowledgement of thoſe manifold ineſtimable favours he hath already received, or hopes to enjoy.

Such is the *godly man*; and after this manner

ner doth *godlineſs* exert its *power*, " caſting " down imaginations, and every high thing " that exalteth itſelf againſt the knowledge " of God, and bringing every thought," word, and action, into full " captivity to " the obedience of Chriſt."

Here then, let me intreat you, in the ſerious review of what hath been delivered upon this branch of the ſubject, to make a fair and impartial trial of yourſelves. God, who knoweth all things, is already acquainted with you: each of you muſt very ſoon be acquainted with himſelf, and all the world ſhall know you too: death is at hand to open your own eyes, and the laſt judgement ſhall publiſh your real character, and expoſe it to the view of angels and men; ſo that, upon all accounts, it is neceſſary that you be early and thoroughly aſſured of your condition. If, when weighed in the balance, you are found wanting, you ſhall have this advantage by the diſcovery, that it will rouſe you from that lethargy, out of which the unquenchable fire would at length awaken you; and powerfully incite you to do ſomething for your ſafety, ere it be too late:

" God's

" God's arm is not ſhortened that it cannot " ſave, neither is his ear heavy that it can- " not hear." The Lord Jeſus is ſtill as " mighty as ever, to ſave to the uttermoſt " all who come unto God by him;" and there is nothing that puts you ſo far out of the road of his mercy, as ſelf-deceit and preſumption do. Let your caſe be ever ſo bad; yet, if you are truly ſenſible of it, and apply to him for relief, you ſhall find him, at all times, ready with open arms to receive you: nay, he invites you to come to him in the mildeſt terms of condeſcenſion and grace; " Come unto me, all ye that labour " and are heavy laden, and I will give you " reſt." So that the moſt compaſſionate and friendly office that a miniſter of the goſpel can perform, is to call upon ſinners loudly and repeatedly, " to examine and " prove their ownſelves," that from an alarming ſenſe of danger, they may be compelled, by a happy neceſſity, to flee for refuge to that Almighty Saviour, who alone can deliver them from the wrath to come. This indeed is the principal aim of my diſcourſe; I have furniſhed you with ſeveral characters

of

of true godlineſs, by the help of which you may diſcover whether you are poſſeſſed of it or not.——Theſe I now leave with you, that every man's conſcience may apply them to himſelf in particular, and pronounce ſentence according to the evidence it may find; ——and ſhall proceed to enquire, very briefly, in the

Second place, Whence it is, that any who deny the power of godlineſs, ſhould ſubmit to the drudgery of maintaining the form of it?

With reſpect to many, it may be ſaid, that they appear in the form of godlineſs by mere accident; becauſe it happens to be in repute among thoſe with whom they converſe. They go to church, purely becauſe others do it; they obſerve an outward decorum of manners, to avoid ſingularity, and walk the cuſtomary round of duties from a natural timidity, or perhaps civility, of temper, which will not ſuffer them to do any thing that may be ſhocking or offenſive to their friends or neighbours. Of this ſort, numbers are to be found in every Chriſtian

Chriſtian ſociety: they want boldneſs, or perhaps invention, to become originals, by ſtriking out a new path for themſelves; and therefore they go along with the multitude, comply with the prevailing cuſtom, and have no other rule of life but this ſhort convenient one, to be always in faſhion, and to do what others are doing around them.

Ambition may be conſidered as another ſource of formality. Men have ſagacity enough to diſcover that reputation is power; and that the more a perſon is eſteemed, the greater authority and influence he will have: and therefore, when religion is in credit, the greateſt enemies to the power of godlineſs often betake themſelves to its outward form, which they employ as a ladder for helping them to climb into a higher place, where, with greater eaſe, they may poſſeſs the means of gratifying their pride, and luſt of domination.

It ſometimes happens too, that covetouſneſs, or the love of money, hath no inconſiderable hand in making men aſ-

ſume

ſume the form of godlineſs. This was the juſt reproach of the Phariſees, thoſe noted formaliſts in the Jewiſh church: They faſted often, they prayed long, they abounded in waſhings, and in many bodily auſterities: but our Saviour hath aſſured us, that they did all "to be ſeen "of men." They were mere pretenders to devotion; *they lived by that craft*, and uſed the forms of religion merely as an engine for drawing the eſtates of widows and orphans into their own hands, that, under the truſt of managing them for their behoof, they might the more ſecurely and ſucceſsfully enrich themſelves at their coſt.

The two laſt are deſigning formaliſts, who know, or at leaſt who may know, that they are hypocrites; ſtrangers, nay, enemies to the power of that godlineſs which they outwardly profeſs to eſteem and honour.

But there are others who practiſe the forms of religion to quiet and pacify a natural conſcience; and do ſo many things, that, in appearance at leaſt, *they are not*

far

far from the kingdom of God: but ſtill they reſiſt the Spirit of grace, and will not ſubmit to the *power of godlineſs.* Reaſon teacheth them, that as their being is derived from God, ſo their well-being muſt wholly depend upon his favour; and revelation proclaims, in the ſtrongeſt terms, that *without holineſs no man ſhall ſee God.* Hence they ſee, that a groſsly wicked and profligate courſe of life, would at once cut them off from all hope of happineſs; and as they cannot bear the thoughts of being eternally miſerable, therefore ſomething muſt be done, in the mean time, to keep the garriſon in peace. Were they preſently to conclude themſelves in a ſtate of condemnation, their ſenſual enjoyments would immediately loſe their reliſh, and the proſpect of future approaching vengeance would embitter and poiſon every comfort they poſſeſs. To remedy this, they advance a few ſteps in the ways of godlineſs, and frame a religion for themſelves, compoſed of as much truth and duty as may conſiſt with their worldly proſperity and pleaſures; which, while it leaves them ſufficient

ent room to profecute their carnal aims, doth at the fame time ferve for a fheath to conſcience, to keep it from wounding them when they are buſied in the brutiſh ſervice of their luſts. Preſent eaſe is what they chiefly covet; and they chooſe no more of religion than ſerves that purpoſe.

Thus have I endeavoured to ſhow, whence it is, that men who deny the power of godlineſs ſubmit to the drudgery of maintaining the form thereof. Some do it to impoſe upon the world, that they may gratify their ambitious or covetous deſires; and others do it to impoſe upon themſelves, that they may not be "tormented before the "time."

And now, let me addreſs my diſcourſe to thoſe who, from what they have heard, are in ſome meaſure convinced that they are the perſons deſcribed in this paſſage. ——"How long, O ye ſons of men, will "ye love vanity?———How long will ye "ſpend your money for that which is not "bread, and your labour for that which "cannot profit you?" How long will you court the deceiving ſhadow of godlineſs,

and fly from the ſubſtance, which would certainly enrich and ſave you? The prodigal's puniſhment is your choice; you feed upon huſks, when there is bread enough in your Father's houſe, and to ſpare: you take all the trouble of appearing religious, and taſte none of the comforts that religion affords; you endure all the fatigue of acting a conſtrained artificial part before men, when, by yielding to the power of godlineſs, you might, with leſs labour, and infinite delight, become the very perſons you feign yourſelves to be. When you reject the truth and reality of *godlineſs*, how can you painfully adhere to the *form* of it? Or, when you go the length of being very punctual in the externals of religion, why do you not go a little farther, and ſtudy to be really and inwardly what you outwardly profeſs, and would ſeem to be?

Is it the praiſe of men that you covet? This at beſt is but an empty fading thing; neither can you be ſure of attaining it. At any rate, the foundation of it ſhall be taken away at the final judgement, when every diſguiſe ſhall be ſtripped off, and the hidden works

works of darkneſs ſhall be brought to light. Nay, God may detect your baſe hypocriſy even before you leave this world; ſo that, as it is written, *Job* xxvii. 23. "Men ſhall clap "their hands at you, and hiſs you out of "your place."——Is it riches you ſeek by your ſeeming religiouſneſs? In this likewiſe you may be diſappointed, according to that other threatening denounced againſt the hypocrite, *Job* xxvii. 16. "Though he heap "up ſilver as the duſt, and prepare raiment "as the clay; he may prepare it, but the "juſt ſhall put it on, and the innocent ſhall "divide the ſilver." Beſides, "Riches pro-"fit not in the day of God's wrath:" And, after all, "What is the hope of the hypo-"crite though he hath gained, when the "Lord taketh away his ſoul?"—"Can the "ruſh grow up without mire? can the flag "grow without water? While it is yet in "its greenneſs, and not cut down, it wither-"eth before any other herb. So are the "paths of all that forget God, and the hy-"pocrite's hope ſhall periſh: whoſe hope "ſhall be cut off, and whoſe truſt ſhall be "a ſpider's web. He ſhall lean upon his

" houſe, but it ſhall not ſtand; he ſhall " hold it faſt, but it ſhall not endure:" And, Oh! how vain is that hope, which ſhall " periſh" at the very time when enjoyment is expected!—Be awakened then, ye ſelf-deceivers, and know that your formality, like the harlot's paint, is only a falſe and borrowed beauty, which ſhall melt away when you draw near the fire: and however you may now hope, while under the threatenings of God, be aſſured that you ſhall not be able to hope when under the execution of them; deſpair ſhall then become eſſential to your miſery.—My brethren, a dream ſo tranſient, ſo momentary, is not worth the having: for the Lord's ſake, then, awake in time, repent unfeignedly of your paſt hypocriſy, and " give no ſleep to your eyes, nor " ſlumber to your eye-lids," till your ſouls be acquainted with the power of godlineſs, that you may have ſomething better to lean upon than deluſive forms, when all earthly props ſhall ſlide from beneath you: " O ſeek " the Lord while he is yet to be found, and " call upon him while he is near."

But there are ſinners of another kind, to whom

whom this ſubject leads me to ſpeak; thoſe, I mean, who have not ſo much as the *form of godlineſs*.——You, I doubt not, have got a great deal to ſay againſt hypocrites; perhaps too you are very well pleaſed that ſo much has been ſaid to expoſe them in the courſe of this ſermon; and now you exult in the thought, that ſuch a hateful denomination cannot be applied to you; if you are not godly, yet ſurely you are honeſt; for you do not pretend to be godly.—— We ſhall, by and by, examine your boaſted honeſty; in the mean time, it deſerves your ſerious conſideration, that, by your own confeſſion, you are in great meaſure uſeleſs in the world; as you contribute nothing either to the glory of God, or to the ſpiritual improvement of your brethren around you. —Now, here the formaliſt hath plainly the advantage of you: for though he neglects and deſtroys his own ſoul, yet, by his fair outſide, and perhaps by the exerciſe of his gifts, he may recommend religion to the eſteem and choice of others; like the ſign-poſt, which, though it hath its ſtation without, doth nevertheleſs mark the door to

ſtrangers, and invite them into the houſe: whereas you neither enter in yourſelves, nor give any aſſiſtance to others; but, on the contrary, do much to diſcourage and hinder them.——But honeſty, you ſay, is the qualification you chiefly value, and you are confident that your claim to that is unqueſtionable. —— Not ſo unqueſtionable as you imagine. —— As you do not profeſs Atheiſm, you muſt be underſtood to acknowledge the being of a God; and as you have not publicly renounced your baptiſm, you certainly mean to paſs for Chriſtians. None of you, I ſuppoſe, are willing to be reputed the enemies of God and of Chriſt; on the contrary, would you not exclaim againſt that man as a cenſorious malevolent hypocrite, who ſhould venture to hint the remoteſt ſuſpicion of this kind?—And now wherein doth your honeſty lie? You would be thought to love God, yet you live in open contempt of his authority, while you withhold that worſhip and homage which are due to him: Is this honeſty?——You call yourſelves Chriſtians, yet you practically reject the inſtitutions of Chriſt, and caſt his moſt

moſt ſacred commandments behind your back: Is that to be honeſt, to profeſs one thing, and to do the contrary?—This, I apprehend, is the very eſſence of hypocriſy: ſo that if you hate hypocrites, you are bound in juſtice to hate yourſelves; for even you are hypocrites no leſs than the formaliſt, though you are not commonly branded with that opprobrious title. The difference betwixt you lies chiefly in this: The *formaliſt* is a ſort of baſhful hypocrite, who, becauſe he cannot deny the debt, makes a ſhew of paying part, and would be thought to pay the whole: whereas the *profane ſinner*, who retains the appellation of *Chriſtian*, though he pays no part of what he acknowledgeth to be due, would nevertheleſs be reputed an honeſt man; and therefore he too is a hypocrite as well as the other, with as little ſenſe, and with much leſs modeſty.

I SHALL conclude this diſcourſe with a few advices, for the help of thoſe who are aiming at real *godlineſs*, and would not be deceived with names and counterfeits.

Let your religion, then, my dear friends,

be principally ſeated in the heart; and never reckon that you are poſſeſſed of it, ſo long as it lodges merely in the underſtanding. Knowledge and faith are in order to practice; and we neither know nor believe to any good purpoſe, unleſs our knowledge and faith influence our practice, and make us truly better men.——Be ſure to live upon the great fundamentals of religion, and let not your attention to theſe be diverted by an intemperate zeal about leſſer things. Place not your religion in diſputable points and ineffectual opinions, but in thoſe weightier matters of the law and goſpel, which are of undoubted importance, and in which holy men, among all the different denominations of Chriſtians, are better agreed than is commonly apprehended.——Chooſe God for your portion and felicity; beware of thinking, that any thing beſides himſelf is neceſſary to make you happy; and live daily upon Chriſt Jeſus, as the only Mediator by whom you can either have acceſs to God, or acceptance with him.——Indulge no ſin; plead for no infirmity; but make it the daily buſineſs of your lives, to "mor-

"tify

" tify the deeds of the body," and " to " crucify the flesh with its affections and " lusts."—Walk continually as in the sight of a holy, just, and heart-searching God; and study to be the same in secret that you wish to appear in public.——Rest not in a low degree of holiness, but love, and long, and strive for the highest.——And for these purposes, pray without ceasing for those promised influences of divine grace, which alone can heal your diseased natures, and carry you forward from one degree of holiness to another, till, being ripened for glory, an entrance shall in due time be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be glory and honour, dominion and thanksgiving, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

SER-

SERMON V.

ISAIAH liii. 3.

He is deſpiſed and rejected of men:—He was deſpiſed, and we eſteemed him not.

THAT the whole of this chapter relates to the Meſſiah, is ſo univerſally acknowledged, that I need not ſpend any of your time in proving it: and whoſoever hath read the hiſtory of our Saviour's life with a proper degree of attention, cannot fail to have remarked the exact accompliſhment of that part of the prophecy which I have choſen for the ſubject of the following diſcourſe.——"Chriſt came unto "his own, but his own received him "not." The learned, the rich, and the mighty among the Jews, were almoſt univerſally combined againſt him; the moſt oppoſite parties, the Phariſees and the Sadducees, united their endeavours to diſcredit

dit his doctrine and miſſion: he was condemned by the ſupreme council of the nation as an impoſtor and blaſphemer; nay, the whole body of the people diſowned him in the moſt public and contemptuous manner before Pontius Pilate the Roman governor, crying out as with one voice, "Away "with him, away with him! crucify him, "crucify him!" Thus was he *deſpiſed and rejected of men*, in the days of his humiliation, to which the prophet more immediately refers.

But as the Jews are not the only people chargeable with this crime; as Chriſt hath been, and ſtill is, *deſpiſed and rejected* by many, even by many of thoſe who were baptized into his church, and are called by his name; we may be allowed to conſider the prediction in my text, as reaching beyond the time of our Saviour's abode on this earth, and looking forward to all that injurious contempt, which, in after ages, ſhould be caſt upon the bleſſed Jeſus, by pretended friends, as well as by open and profeſſed enemies.

In this large extent I ſhall at preſent take the

the liberty to diſcourſe upon theſe words. And my deſign is,—*firſt*, To ſhow in what reſpects it may ſtill be ſaid that men *deſpiſe and reject* the Saviour; and,—*ſecondly*, To inquire whence it is that they do this?—After which, I ſhall lay before you the heinous nature of their guilt; and direct you to the proper improvement of the whole.

I BEGIN with ſhowing in what reſpects it may ſtill be ſaid that *Chriſt is deſpiſed and rejected of men.*

True it is, that his glorious perſon is no more expoſed to the outrage of men. That body which was "ſcourged," "buffeted," "ſpit upon," and "crucified," is far beyond the reach of any ſuch abuſive treatment. He is now exalted to his Father's right hand; where he is adored and worſhipped with the moſt lowly reverence by all the heavenly hoſt. But yet there are ſome other, and no leſs criminal, reſpects, in which he is ſtill *deſpiſed and rejected* of many. —— I ſpeak not here of thoſe baptized infidels, who openly "deny the Lord "that

" that bought them," and traduce the whole of his religion as a mere human contrivance;—neither ſhall I take much notice of thoſe who, while they profeſs a general regard to Chriſt, do, at the ſame time, entertain and publiſh opinions evidently inconſiſtent with a real eſteem of him: though it cannot be wholly overlooked, that ſuch there are in the Chriſtian world;—ſome denying his divinity, and others his ſatisfaction;—ſome diſowning the neceſſity, and others the virtue and efficacy of his grace:——All which are ſo many different ways of vilifying the great Redeemer, and detracting from his true honour and dignity.——But, paſſing theſe, my deſign is, to ſhow, that even among ſuch as you, my brethren, who I truſt are not tainted with theſe doctrinal errors, it is poſſible to find ſome who ungratefully *deſpiſe and reject* the Saviour. May God open their hearts to receive conviction, that they may no longer delude themſelves with " a " name to live," while they are ſpiritually " dead," and liable to everlaſting deſtruction.

In

In general, then, all who are grosly ignorant of the religion of Jesus, must necessarily be reputed despisers of him: for as the means of acquiring knowledge are so easy, and the opportunities of receiving instruction so frequent, it must be owing to some culpable neglect of their own, if any who are capable of learning other things, be unacquainted with the great doctrines of Christianity; and this neglect too plainly betrays a contemptuous disregard of Christ himself.

More particularly, men may be said to *despise* Christ, when they do not receive him as their alone Saviour, as the true, the living, nay, the only way to the Father.—He is set forth in Scripture as the sole mediator between God and man; who, by his atoning sacrifice, hath satisfied divine justice, and purchased the Holy Spirit to heal our diseased natures, and thereby render us meet for the perfection of our happiness, in the enjoyment of that God who cannot behold iniquity: so that we do not properly express our esteem of him, unless we acknowledge him in that important character,

character, and pay to him thoſe practical regards which it claims.———To honour him is, to acquieſce, thankfully, in this ordinance of God for redeeming his fallen creatures; it is, to renounce all hope of being juſtified or ſaved by any other means, and to rely wholly upon the ſacrifice and interceſſion of this High Prieſt, for the pardon of our ſins, and the acceptance of our perſons with God; it is, to apply that blood to ourſelves which "cleanſeth from "all ſin," and to receive his Spirit to dwell within us, and to ſway the ſceptre over all the powers and faculties of our ſouls.——A lawyer is honoured when men employ him, and commit their cauſe to his management; a phyſician is honoured when men apply to him for advice, and uſe his preſcriptions for their cure:—In like manner, the great Advocate with the Father, and the ſovereign Phyſician of ſouls, is honoured, not when men talk well of him, and verbally profeſs an eſteem of him, but when they actually commit their cauſe to him, and place their entire dependence upon him for pardon and grace, and complete ſalvation;

tion; and they that come ſhort of this, are in reality no other than deſpiſers of Chriſt; and, as ſuch, ſhall be diſowned by him at his ſecond coming.

Again, Chriſt is *deſpiſed and rejected of men*, when they practically deny his authority, by breaking his commandments. We are expreſsly told, "that all power is committed to him in heaven and on earth; "—for God hath put all things under his "feet, and given him to be head over all "things for the church." Now, to honour him in this character, is to yield a cheerful and unreſerved obedience to his laws; it is to acknowledge his ſovereignty over us, and his property in us, not only as our Creator, but likewiſe as our Redeemer, who hath bought us with his blood; and in conſequence thereof, to glorify him both with our bodies and our ſpirits, which are his. Therefore, all they who make their own will the rule of their conduct, who do not reſign themſelves entirely to the diſpoſal and government of this King of Zion, whatever their profeſſion be, they certainly deſpiſe and reject him; and though

not

not in words perhaps, yet by their deeds they say with the rebellious Jews, *We will not have this man to reign over us.* "Why "call ye me Lord, Lord," said our Saviour, "and do not the things which I say?" plainly intimating, that all outward expressions of esteem, are mere hypocrisy and empty grimace, without a sincere and unlimited subjection to his laws.

Further, men *despise* Christ, when they do not give him the chief room in their hearts, nor prefer him in their choice to every thing else. The language of a true disciple is, "Whom have I in heaven but "thee? and there is none upon earth "whom I desire besides thee." If Christ be not esteemed and loved above every thing, he is not truly esteemed or loved at all: and this I take to be the meaning of these strong expressions, *Luke* xiv. 26. "If "any man come to me, and hate not his "father and mother, and wife and chil- "dren, and brethren and sisters, yea, and "his own life also, he cannot be my dis- "ciple." They who are not willing to part with ease and pleasures, with riches,

and honours, and friends, with whatever is dear to them in a preſent world, nay, with life itſelf, for Chriſt's ſake, plainly diſcover that they have no juſt ſenſe of his worth and excellence: They who do not prefer him to the whole world, and cannot reſt in his love as a ſufficient portion, without any thing elſe, pretend what they will, they do not truly eſteem him. And, to conclude this head,

They too muſt be numbered among the *deſpiſers* of Chriſt, who do not publicly confeſs him before men, or who wilfully neglect any of thoſe ordinances he hath inſtituted, as the methods of teſtifying our ſubjection to him, and the means of receiving benefits from him. I really do not ſee how any man can be ſaid to eſteem Chriſt, who doth not embrace every proper opportunity of converſing with him, or of hearing tidings concerning him: and, in particular, the habitual neglect of ſocial worſhip, either in the family or in the church, hath ſuch a ſtrong appearance of eſtrangement and diſregard, that it is hard for me to conceive, how any perſon can perſiſt in it, who

who doth not in his heart deſpiſe the Saviour.

Thus have I endeavoured to ſhow, in what reſpects it may be ſaid, even at this preſent time, that Chriſt *is deſpiſed and rejected of men.*

THE cauſes of this contempt are the *ſecond* thing to be enquired into. And I apprehend—the *firſt* and main cauſe of this contempt of Chriſt among the hearers of the goſpel, is a ſecret unbelief which they are not aware of. For did they truly believe the doctrine concerning the Saviour; —that he only " is the way, the truth, and " the life; and that no man cometh," or can come, " to the Father, but by him;" —that he is God's beloved Son, in whom he is well pleaſed;—and that without an intereſt in him, and entire ſubjection to him, they cannot be ſaved;—it would be impoſſible to deſpiſe him in any of theſe ways I have mentioned: for *to them who* thus *believe, Chriſt is*, and muſt be, *precious.* But men deceive themſelves: they have a vague, confuſed, and indeterminate opinion, and

are accuſtomed to ſay in the general, that the Scriptures are the word of God; but they never ſaw the evidence of their truth in ſuch a light as to be thoroughly perſuaded of it. They think the doctrines contained in the Chriſtian revelation *may* be true; but here they ſtop; and becauſe they are not downright infidels, they fancy themſelves believers, when in truth they are not.

2dly, The love of this world is another cauſe of mens contempt of Chriſt, and of his goſpel. They can afford him honourable titles, and external homage; but to follow him fully, will not conſiſt with their worldly deſires and aims. Such was the young ruler, who addreſſed that important queſtion to our Saviour, "Good Maſter, "what ſhall I do to inherit eternal life?" *Luke* xviii. 18. He appeared thoughtful and ſerious, beyond what might have been expected from his age and rank; and had gone an uncommon length, in an outward conformity to the law: but when our Lord commanded him "to ſell all, and give to "the poor, he was ſad at that ſaying, and

"went

" went away ſorrowful, becauſe he had " large poſſeſſions." Of this we have a ſtriking illuſtration in the parable of the marriage-ſupper, which is recorded in the 22d chapter of Matthew's goſpel. The invitation is very warm and preſſing at the 4th verſe; " Behold, I have prepared my " dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are " killed, and all things are ready: come " to the marriage." But it follows immediately, " They made light of it, and went " their ways, one to his farm, another to " his merchandiſe." This, my brethren, ſtill continues to be a very common cauſe of mens deſpiſing and rejecting Chriſt. They ſee the world, but they ſee not the celeſtial glory: the one is preſent; the other only future, and therefore too remote to work upon their affections. If both could be obtained, they would, no doubt, be very well ſatisfied; and if religion and their worldly intereſt take one road, they will be ready enough to pay the compliment to our Lord, and to ſay, that they follow him: but when theſe ſeparate, then their contempt diſcovers itſelf: they cleave to the

world, and forſake Chriſt.—" Demas hath " forſaken me," ſaid Paul, " having loved " this preſent world."——So true is that ſaying of the Apoſtle John (1 *Epiſt.* ii. 15.), " If any man love the world, the love of " the Father," and with equal reaſon we may add, the love of the Redeemer, " is not " in him."

A *third* cauſe of this contempt is mens ignorance of their own condition: like the church of the Laodiceans, they " boaſt, that " they are rich, and increaſed with goods, " and ſtanding in need of nothing; and " know not that they are wretched, and " miſerable, and poor, and blind, and na- " ked." Some have ſo high an opinion of their own underſtanding, that they ſee no need of a prophet to inſtruct them. Others have ſuch low thoughts of the evil of ſin, and ſuch a conceit of their own righteouſneſs and worth, that they ſee as little need of a prieſt to expiate their guilt, and reconcile them to God. A third ſort lay ſo much ſtreſs on their unaſſiſted powers, and the efficacy of their own reſolutions and endeavours, that a king to ſubdue them by his

his grace and ſpirit, appears altogether ſuperfluous. Thus Chriſt is deſpiſed through mens ignorance and pride: unacquainted with their ſtate of darkneſs, guilt, and corruption, they reject him who cometh in the name of the Lord to ſave them;—they feel not their diſeaſes, and therefore treat the phyſician with contempt and ſcorn. Once more, in the

4th place, Not a few pour contempt upon Chriſt, and reject his offers from day to day, from an opinion that they may obtain his aid at what time ſoever they ſhall chooſe to aſk it. They ſay not indeed with the Atheiſt,——"Let us eat and drink, for to-"morrow we die:" neither do they ſay with the groſs Antinomian,——Let us ſin without fear, ſeeing Chriſt hath died for us, and is therefore determined to ſave us at any rate. But they ſay what is equally abſurd, Let us take a full draught of the ſweet poiſon of ſin, ſeeing the remedy is ſo near at hand, that we may apply it when we pleaſe.——O that this were not too common! I am afraid, it will appear upon inquiry, that there is too, too much of this

vile presumption in our hearts. But can there be a greater dishonour done to Christ? Must his bloody sufferings, and unparalleled love, support our rebellion, and embolden us to sin? Can any thing be more criminal? ——But this I shall have occasion to speak of immediately; and shall only say, at present, that thousands, and ten thousands, have perished, who once had the remedy as near them as you have, and who also, perhaps, dreamed of the same facility in applying it. To which I may add, that out of your own mouths you shall be condemned at last, and shall find nothing to plead in arrest of judgement, when God shall say to you, Why did you not repent, and believe in the Saviour, seeing you thought it so easy, that you could do it when you pleased?

O that men were wise! that they understood these things, and would consider, in this day of their merciful visitation, the things that belong to their peace, before they be for ever hid from their eyes! I cannot allow myself to think, that any of you are already acquainted with all the deformity

formity of the ſin I have been ſpeaking of; and that, after viewing it in its full dimenſions, you are perfectly reconciled to it, and reſolved to perſiſt in it. I would gladly hope that this is not the caſe; but rather that the great enemy of your happineſs has hitherto kept you in the dark, and in great meaſure concealed from you, both your guilt and your danger. Perhaps, to this moment you have never ſeriouſly thought upon your ways, but blindly followed the faſhion of the world, and ſuffered yourſelves to be carried along with the croud, without any ſuſpicion, that you are chargeable with crimes of ſuch a helliſh nature, as are included in *deſpiſing and rejecting* the Saviour. I ſhall therefore proceed, in the

Third place, To give you a ſhort repreſentation of the malignity of this ſin; which, if duly attended to, may be of uſe to diſſolve the inchantment, by which the god of this world hath ſo long blinded your eyes, and rendered you inſenſible to the miſery of your condition.

Conſider,

Conſider, then, that to *deſpiſe and reject* ſuch a Saviour, is the blackeſt ingratitude that can poſſibly be imagined. It was a cutting queſtion that Chriſt put to the Jews, when they went about to kill him: "Many good works have I ſhewed you "from my Father, for which of theſe "works do ye ſtone me?"——To render evil for good, hatred for love, is accounted monſtrous among men; and the perſon who behaves in ſuch a manner towards his fellow-creature, is juſtly condemned and abhorred by all: and yet the moſt heinous and deteſtable inſtance of ingratitude among men is as nothing, when compared with your ingratitude towards God. Did he, without any ſolicitation from you, and not only without, but even contrary to, your deſert, ſend his own Son into the world to ſave you? Did the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, "the brightneſs of "the Father's glory, and the expreſs "image of his perſon," aſſume your nature; become a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with griefs; lead a poor, afflicted, perſecuted life; and at laſt die a ſhameful,

ful, painful, and accurſed death; to ſatisfy offended juſtice, and to render your happineſs conſiſtent with the honour of the divine government?——And is this your requital?

I beſeech you, my brethren, to beſtow ſome attention upon this; and if your hearts have any ſoftneſs at all, ſuch unparalleled baſeneſs cannot fail to make the deepeſt impreſſion upon them. Does this aſtoniſhing undeſerved goodneſs merit no regard? Doth God's unſpeakable gift to men deſerve no returns of gratitude and praiſe? Shall the blood of Chriſt be ſhed in vain, nay, trampled under foot, as an unholy thing? Will you "crucify the Son "of God afreſh," and ſay, by your neglect of his great ſalvation, "Away with "him! away with him!"——"We have "loved ſtrangers, and after them we will "go?" Surely you cannot, you will not, pretend to juſtify this conduct: there is ſomething in it ſo diſingenuous and perverſe, ſo ſhocking and unnatural, that I am perſuaded, when you attend to it, you muſt

muſt loathe and abhor yourſelves on account of it.

But this is not the whole of your guilt: Your ingratitude is heightened by the moſt inſolent contempt both of the wiſdom and goodneſs of God. You charge God with folly, when you reject the terms of the goſpel-covenant: for your behaviour plainly implies one of the following accuſations; either that this method of ſalvation is unneceſſary, and that God from all eternity hath employed his counſels about a needleſs affair; or elſe that it is ineffectual, and that the perſon whom God hath choſen to execute this deſign, is not worthy to be depended upon; or that the terms propoſed are ſo rigorous and ſevere, that a wiſe man would rather chooſe to periſh than ſubmit to them.—Thus doſt thou arraign thy God, O ſinner!—And art thou able to make good thy charge? Doſt thou hope to prevail in the day when God ſhall plead with thee?

Nay, further, by *deſpiſing and rejecting* Chriſt, you openly proclaim war againſt the Moſt High, and bid him defiance. He hath

hath " ſet his King upon his holy hill of " Zion," and " put all things under his " feet:" he hath ordained, by an irreverſible decree, that " all men ſhould honour " the Son, even as they honour the Fa- " ther:" he hath publiſhed to the world, that there is no other name given among men, by which they can be ſaved, but the name of Jeſus;—that this glorious Mediator is conſtituted the final Judge of mankind; and that they who do not bow to the ſceptre of his grace, ſhall be daſhed in pieces with his rod of iron, in that day, when he ſhall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, to take vengeance upon thoſe who knew not God, and obeyed not this goſpel which we now preach to you:—And yet, in the face of all theſe declarations, you proudly ſay, by your conduct, " We will not have this man to " reign over us;" we neither fear his power, nor court his grace, but are determined to ſtand on our own defence.

Such, my brethren, is the malignity of your ſin: it includes the blackeſt ingratitude, heightened by the moſt inſolent contempt,

tempt, nay, an open defiance of the omnipotent God; rejecting his offered mercy, and daring him to execute all the rigour of his juſtice.——I do not mean, that you are at preſent conſcious of this complicated impiety; I rather ſuppoſe, that you are ſtartled when you hear it mentioned, and are ready to reply as Hazael did to Eliſha, "Is thy "ſervant a dog, that he ſhould do theſe "things?"—But be aſſured, all I have now ſaid ſhall be made good againſt you at laſt if you continue to deſpiſe and reject the Saviour: and the greateſt mercy that can befal you in the mean time, is, to get thoſe eyes opened which Satan hath ſo long cloſed, that you may ſee and abhor your guilt in this matter. O be exhorted, then, deliberately to weigh the repreſentation I have given you! and think what muſt become of you, if you go out of this world with ſuch a dreadful load of guilt as I have endeavoured to deſcribe.

By this time you muſt all ſee your concern in this ſubject. I have told you, that it is poſſible, even among ſuch as you, who attend upon ordinances, and profeſs a general

neral eſteem of Chriſt, to find *deſpiſers and rejecters of him:* I have mentioned ſundry inſtances of contempt, which perſons, who are neither Jews nor infidels, but who call, and even think themſelves, the diſciples of Jeſus, may be guilty of; and you have juſt now heard the heinous nature, and the high aggravations, of this ſin: ſo that, you ſee, they are no trivial matters I have been talking of, but matters which infinitely concern the whole Chriſtian world, and yourſelves in particular. —— I now come to point out the improvement, which I humbly wiſh, and fervently pray, that every one of you, my dear friends and brethren, would make of this ſubject.

I would have you, then, as the beſt and moſt neceſſary improvement of all that you have heard, to enter immediately into your own hearts, and make an impartial inquiry into your eſteem of Chriſt, according to the marks I formerly gave you. O beware of ſelf-deceit in this trial!—You may weep at the hiſtory of his ſufferings, when you read or hear how barbarouſly he was treated by

by the Jews; and yet you may *reject* him. —You may feel ſome emotions of gratitude and joy, when you hear of the greatneſs of his love, and the value of his purchaſe, and yet periſh for *deſpiſing* him. —— You may, under alarms of conſcience, feel ſtrong deſires after him to ſave you from the wrath of God, and, after all, be heart enemies to him.—Nay, you may be zealous reprovers of others for deſpiſing Chriſt, and paint the deformity of this ſin in ſtronger colours than I have been able to do;—but, alas! if you have no better evidence for proving your eſteem of him, — your preſent truſt is no better than "the ſpider's web," and your hope, in the time of your greateſt need, ſhall be as "the giving up of the ghoſt." In ſhort, your eſteem of Chriſt muſt be greater than your eſteem of all the profits, and pleaſures, and honours, of this world; and you muſt manifeſt this eſteem, by a cordial acceptance of him, and an entire ſubjection to him; otherwiſe you ſhall be condemned at laſt, as perſons who have *deſpiſed and rejected* this great Redeemer.

Thus, my brethren, have I held up the glaſs,

glaſs, in which, if you are not wilfully blind, you may behold your true picture:—and if you have attended, and ſuffered conſcience to do its office, ſome of you, I am perſuaded, muſt be convinced, that you are the perſons who have hitherto *deſpiſed and rejected* the Saviour; and therefore it is time for me to aſk, What is your preſent reſolution? Is this a ſtate to be continued in? Would any of you, if left to your own choice, be willing to be found in this condition at laſt?—Brethren, this is a ſerious queſtion, and ought not to be ſlightly paſſed over: The Lord Jeſus now waiteth upon you for an anſwer;—but remember, that ere long you muſt wait upon him for a doom: As therefore you would be found of him in peace, come now to a ſpeedy and firm determination.—You have deſpiſed him too long already; O do not add this farther inſtance of contempt, to heſitate, while I now plead with you, whether or no you ſhould this moment renounce all his competitors, and give him the chief room in your hearts.—May I hope you are reſolved? Happy you, thrice happy, if you be ſo! Now you begin to live, your former unworthy

behaviour ſhall all be forgiven; and that compaſſionate Redeemer, who procured ſparing mercy for you even when you deſpiſed him, and, by his gracious interpoſition, hath kept you alive till this hour, will not reject your penitent believing ſouls, but will accept your eſteem and love, though late; and, in return, will beſtow upon you all the enriching benefits of his purchaſe. But if any of you ſhall juſtify your former contempt, and reſolve to perſiſt in it,—I muſt declare the righteous ſentence of God; and I ſhall do it in the words of John the Baptiſt, (*John* iii. 36.) "He that believeth not "the Son, ſhall not ſee life; but the wrath "of God abideth on him."—Let my counſel therefore be acceptable unto you: "Seek "the Lord while he is yet to be found, and "call upon him while he is near.——Kiſs "the Son, leſt he be angry, and ye periſh "from the way: for if once his wrath be "kindled but a little, then ſhall it be found "that they," and they only, "are bleſſed, "who put their truſt in him."

SER-

SERMON VI.

ROMANS iii. 19.

Now we know, that what things ſoever the law ſaith, it ſaith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be ſtopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

THE great deſign of this epiſtle, is to lead men to Chriſt, as the only refuge for periſhing ſinners: and becauſe none will value a remedy, but they who feel their diſeaſe, and wiſh for health, the Apoſtle therefore, in the two foregoing chapters, examines the condition both of *Gentiles* and *Jews;* under which denominations, the whole poſterity of Adam are included; and proves, by plain undeniable facts, that all, without exception, are guilty before God, and conſequently, that all ſtand in need of a Saviour.——In the

verſes immediately preceding my text, he brings ſeveral quotations from the Old-Teſtament writings, which give a very ſtrong and melancholy repreſentation of the corruption and depravity of the human kind.——But leſt the Jews ſhould alledge, that theſe, and other paſſages of the like nature, were only deſcriptive of the Gentile nations, and could not juſtly be extended to them, whom God had choſen from the reſt of the world, and ſet apart for himſelf as his peculiar inheritance; he judged it proper to remind them, that the ſacred books, from which he had taken the above deſcription, were primarily addreſſed to the Jews, and deſigned for their inſtruction and uſe: *We know*, ſays he, *that what things ſoever the law ſaith, it ſaith to them who are under the law;* conſequently theſe quotations, which are all expreſsly contained in the law, may and ought to be conſidered as a juſt repreſentation of the ſtate of thoſe to whom that law or revelation was given. And he further adds, that they were inſerted in Scripture for this very purpoſe, that the plea of innocence being taken

taken away from the Jews as well as from the Gentiles, *every mouth might be ſtopped, and* thus *all the world might become guilty before God.* From which words, as they ſtand connected with the Apoſtle's reaſoning, we learn, in the

Firſt place, That it is extremely difficult to bring men to a proper ſenſe and acknowledgement of their guilt and miſery.

I hope none will be ſo unreaſonable as to require a laboured proof of this obſervation; for you will eaſily perceive, that I can have no other witneſſes to produce but yourſelves. I affirm, that it is ſo, upon the authority of Scripture; and can only appeal to your own hearts for the truth of it.———Beſides, none will deny this who are already convinced of their guilt and miſery: for this is an eſſential property of real conviction, that the deeper it is, it renders the perſon ſtill more ſenſible of the natural hardneſs of his heart; ſo that nothing grieves him ſo much, as that he cannot grieve more for ſinning againſt God: And they who are of an oppoſite character, who

boaſt, " That they are rich, and increaſed " with goods, and ſtanding in need of no- " thing;" ſuch perſons, I ſay, prove the truth of this obſervation, by demanding a proof of it, and are themſelves examples of the thing they deny.

I know it is an eaſy matter to bring men to a general acknowledgement, that they are ſinners. Many are ready enough to confeſs this much, who, at the ſame time, have a very good opinion of their ſtate: for though they cannot lay claim to perfect innocence, yet they look upon their guilt as a very trivial thing, and imagine that their vices are more than overbalanced by the virtues they are poſſeſſed of; and thus, " being ignorant of God's righ- " teouſneſs," or of that righteouſneſs which is neceſſary to juſtify a ſinner in the ſight of God, " they go about to eſtabliſh their " own righteouſneſs, and will not ſub- " mit themſelves unto the righteouſneſs of " God."

Pride is the hereditary diſeaſe of our natures: we derive it from our firſt parents; and though it is ſubdued in all who are ſanctified,

ſanctified, yet ſtill it lives within them, and is always the laſt part of the old man that dies. Nay, it is apt to grow upon the ruin of other ſins, as we ſee in that noted inſtance of the Phariſee, who, under the ſpecious pretext of thanking God for his grace, went up into the temple, merely to give vent to his ſelf-admiration: "God," ſaid he, "I thank thee, that I "am not as other men are, extortioners, "unjuſt, adulterers; I faſt twice a-week, "I pay tithes of all that I poſſeſs." What he ſaid might be true; nay, our Lord ſeems plainly to admit that it was ſo: yet he tells us, that this vain-glorious creature carried nothing away with him but his ſelf-conceit: he returned to his own houſe without the bleſſing of God: "For every "one that exalteth himſelf, ſhall be abaſed; "whereas he that humbleth himſelf, ſhall "be exalted."

This, my brethren, is one main cauſe why the preaching of the goſpel hath ſo little effect. Could we bring men to a ſenſe of their guilt and miſery, they would gladly liſten to the tidings of a Saviour. But this is difficult work indeed. We can ſcarcely

perſuade the moſt profligate wretch to think himſelf in danger, till God lay his hand upon him, and ſet death before his eyes. Judge, then, how hard a taſk it muſt be, to convince the more cloſe and reſerved ſinner! who probably has got beneath him ſome empty forms of duty, upon which he leans, and confidently preſumes that all ſhall be well with him.

I have frequently obſerved, that no ſermons are ſo taſteleſs to many hearers, as thoſe which treat of the Saviour: they can liſten to other ſubjects; but when we talk of Jeſus Chriſt, and of that great ſalvation "which angels deſire to look into," they diſmiſs their attention, and perhaps make a ſhift to ſleep in their ſeats; when, God knows, were they aware of the thouſandth part of their danger, they would find it difficult enough to ſleep on their beds.—Did we really ſee ourſelves in a juſt light, could we diveſt ourſelves, for a little, of our pride and prejudice, till we got one ſerious and impartial view of our natural condition, this would render a Saviour ſo neceſſary, that we ſhould never be at reſt till we had ſecured

ſecured his friendſhip: But, as our Lord himſelf hath told us, "they that are whole "have no need of the phyſician, but they "that are ſick," I ſhall therefore proceed to ſhow, in the

Second place, That all men, without exception, are guilty before God; and that whoever attends to the Scriptures of truth, or gives ear to the teſtimony of his own conſcience, may ſoon diſcover ſuch plain convincing evidence of guilt, as is ſufficient to ſtop his mouth, and to render him ſpeechleſs and ſelf-condemned in the preſence of a juſt and holy God. ——— This propoſition is perfectly conſiſtent with the former: for the difficulty of bringing men to a right ſenſe and acknowledgement of their guilt and miſery, doth not ariſe from any want of evidence, but is purely owing to their own inattention and pride: the ſad truth is clear as noon-day; but they ſhut their eyes, and will not ſee it.

As the teſtimony of Scripture is full and explicit, ſo the ſhort abſtract contained in the foregoing verſes, ſpeaks upon this head with

with the utmoſt poſſible preciſion. "There "is none righteous, no not one: there is "none that underſtandeth, there is none "that ſeeketh after God. They are all "gone out of the way, they are together "become unprofitable, there is none that "doth good, no not one. Their throat is "an open ſepulchre; with their tongues "they have uſed deceit; the poiſon of aſps "is under their lips: whoſe mouth is full "of curſing and bitterneſs. Their feet "are ſwift to ſhed blood. Deſtruction and "miſery are in their ways: and the way of "peace have they not known. There is "no fear of God before their eyes." And theſe things, the Apoſtle informs us, were written, not merely to ſtop the mouths of ſome notorious offenders, who proclaim their ſins as Sodom, and hide them not; but *that every mouth might be ſtopped, and all the world become guilty before God.* Accordingly, at the 23d verſe of this chapter, he concludes upon the whole evidence in the following words: "For all have ſinned, and "come ſhort of the glory of God."

This truth hath been atteſted by the moſt

moſt eminent ſaints that ever lived upon earth. "Behold, I was ſhapen in iniquity," ſaid David, "and in ſin did my mother con-"ceive me:" And therefore he pleads in another place, "Enter not into judgement "with thy ſervant, O Lord; for in thy "ſight ſhall no man living be juſtified." ——"We are all as an unclean thing," ſaid the Prophet Iſaiah, "and all our righte-"ouſneſſes are as filthy rags; and we all "do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like "the wind, have carried us away."——Neither have the ſaints under the New-Teſtament diſpenſation been any whit behind them in penitent acknowledgements of their guilt. Paul ſtyles himſelf "the chief of ſin-"ners;" and the beloved diſciple declares, in expreſs terms, that all pretenſions to innocence are not only falſe, but blaſphemous: "If we ſay that we have no ſin, we deceive "ourſelves, and the truth is not in us." ——Nay, "if we ſay that we have not ſin-"ned, we make God a liar, and his word "is not in us." 1 *John* i. 8, 9.

This further appears from the various kinds of miſery which abound in the world, eſpecially

eſpecially death, from which none of Adam's poſterity are exempted. Theſe do neceſſarily ſuppoſe guilt; for it is not agreeable to the juſtice of God to afflict and puniſh innocent creatures.——Now, this mean of conviction is ſo plain and obvious, that a man muſt do great violence to his reaſon, before he can reſiſt the evidence it affords. Goodneſs and juſtice are attributes which are univerſally conſidered as moſt eſſential to the Supreme Being; and yet it is impoſſible to account for the preſent calamitous ſtate of mankind, in a conſiſtency with theſe perfections, upon any other ſuppoſition than this, that "all have ſinned," and thereby incurred his righteous diſpleaſure. ——So that you ſee there is no penury of witneſſes upon this head. The Scriptures expreſsly declare, that all are ſinners;—the moſt eminent ſaints under both diſpenſations have atteſted the truth of this aſſertion;—and the many awful tokens of the divine diſpleaſure, which we daily behold and feel, render it abſurd to ſuppoſe the contrary.

But there is yet another witneſs behind, whoſe

whoſe teſtimony can be liable to no objection; a witneſs which every man will find within his own breaſt;—I mean, *conſcience*, to which I now appeal for the truth of this matter. And here I ſhall renew the queſtion which Solomon propoſed many ages ago: "Who can ſay I have made my heart "clean, I am pure from my ſins?" Can you diſcover nothing amiſs in your temper and practice? Do they in all points agree with the rule of God's word? Dare any of you appeal to the juſtice of God for acquittal? and claim happineſs as the due reward of your obedience? Say, O man! haſt thou no need at all of pardoning mercy? Wilt thou give it under thy hand, that thou ſhalt never plead the merits of a Saviour for thy juſtification? that at the hour of death, or in the day of judgement, thou ſhalt never once implore his help, nor cry for mercy, but ſtand upon the foundation of thy perſonal righteouſneſs before his impartial tribunal?——Or, rather, my brethren, are you not conſcious of innumerable inſtances of guilt, wherein you have acted in direct oppoſition, not only to

the

the written law, but to the inward ſenſe and authority of your own minds;——doing what ye knew was diſpleaſing to God;—— and that, not by the mere force of ſudden temptation, but coolly and deliberately, in the face of thoſe arguments which ought in all reaſon to have reſtrained you from them?——I think I may venture to affirm, that there is not one perſon here preſent who is not able to recollect ſeveral inſtances of this kind: And if our own blind and partial hearts do now condemn us, alas! how ſhall we juſtify ourſelves at the bar of that God "who is greater than our hearts, "and knoweth all things?"——This leads me to obſerve, in the

Third place, That one great end of the law is, to humble the pride of men; that, from a conviction of their guilty and miſerable eſtate by nature, they may, as it were, be compelled, by a happy neceſſity, to flee for relief to the goſpel-method of ſalvation through Chriſt.

This important truth is directly aſſerted by the Apoſtle in my text, and frequently repeated

repeated in other parts of his writings. Nay, the principal ſcope of this epiſtle is, to call off the Jews from any dependence upon their own righteouſneſs, by giving them a fair repreſentation of the ſpirituality, extent, and rigour of the law; that finding themſelves unable either to anſwer its demands, or to endure its curſe, they might thankfully embrace the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who is indeed "the end of the law for "righteouſneſs to every one that believeth." —And the ſubſerviency of the law to the goſpel, or the uſe of the law to lead men to the Saviour, will evidently appear, if we conſider,

That the law demands nothing leſs than a perfect unſinning obedience to all its precepts: it makes no manner of allowance for the infirmities of men; for "whoſoever "ſhall keep the whole law, and yet offend "in one point," in the eye of the Lawgiver, "is guilty of all." It declares what is due to God from his creatures, and inſiſts upon the payment of it even to the uttermoſt farthing. In the law, ſtrictly conſidered, there is no proviſion or promiſe of

pardon

pardon to the guilty: on the contrary, it denounces condemnation and wrath againſt all tranſgreſſors of what kind ſoever; for thus it is written, "Curſed is every one "who continueth not in all things which "are written in the book of the law to do "them." It is not enough to do *ſome* things which are commanded; we muſt do them *all:* Nor is it even ſufficient that we do all things for a ſeaſon; we muſt alſo *continue* in them, otherwiſe we forfeit the divine friendſhip, and become liable to the wrath of an infinitely juſt and omnipotent God. This is the genuine voice of the law, *Do and live;* "but the ſoul that ſinneth ſhall "ſurely die." It knoweth no middle ſentence between theſe two: it doth not whiſper one word of mercy; but the ſmalleſt deviation ſubjects the tranſgreſſor to the juſtice of God, and to all the fatal effects of his indignation, both in this life and in that which is to come.

Now, this being the caſe, it is eaſy to diſcern the ſubſerviency of the law to the goſpel; or, in other words, the uſe of the law to lead men to the Saviour. The law diſ-

diſcovers ſin, and at the ſame time demands an unſinning obedience: None of us can plead innocence, and the law admits of no excuſe for guilt; nay, it is not only ſilent as to the doctrine of forgiveneſs, which might leave ſome room for conjecture and hope, but in plain and awful words pronounces the ſentence of death, and dooms to irremediable puniſhment all the workers of iniquity without exception. Thus the ſinner is "bound hand and foot," as it were "and caſt into priſon;" *his mouth is ſtopped*, and nothing remains for him, but either to continue in miſery, and bear the curſe of God for ever; or elſe to appeal from the law to the goſpel, and to claim the benefit of that indemnity which Chriſt hath purchaſed with his blood, and freely offers to all who, condemning themſelves, and renouncing their own righteouſneſs, flee to him as their hope and city of refuge. ——From all which, we may conclude, in the

Fourth and *laſt* place, That every apologiſing ſinner, who opens his mouth in his

own vindication, doth impiously give God the lie, and exclude himself from the offers of his mercy and grace; whereas the humble self-condemning sinner lies, so to speak, in the very road of mercy, and shall through faith in Christ Jesus obtain salvation with eternal glory.

This inference is so just and obvious, that it scarcely needs any illustration. For if "all are sinners;" and if this be one great end of the law, to bring men to a sense and acknowledgement of their guilt, that they may be compelled to flee to Christ Jesus for relief;——what foolish, self-destroying creatures must those be, who, in despight of the clearest evidence, and in flat contradiction to the only method of deliverance and hope, will offer to babble in their own defence? ——What can you propose by this conduct, O sinners! God puts it to your choice, as it were, in what court you would be tried, whether you will plead at the tribunal of justice, or of mercy? If you penitently acknowledge your guilt, and cry for mercy through the great Mediator, he is infinitely more willing to bestow it upon you, than

you

you can be to ask it of him:——But if you proudly insist in your own vindication; if you extenuate your guilt, or depend upon any thing in yourselves for pardon and acceptance, you thereby incur the rigour of the law; you "shall have judgement without mercy," and "Jesus Christ can profit "you nothing."

Be persuaded, then, my dear friends, as the proper improvement of all that has been said, "to humble yourselves presently under the mighty hand of God, that you "may be exalted in due time." See and acknowledge your guilt and unworthiness, that you may not be finally *condemned with the world*; and beg of God, that he may search and try you, and make you thoroughly acquainted with your real condition;——that, finding yourselves "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, "and naked," you may repair, without delay, to that all-sufficient Saviour, "whose "blood cleanseth from all sin," and "who "is made of God unto all who believe on

" him, wiſdom, and righteouſneſs, and ſanc-
" tification, and redemption."

As for you upon whom the law hath already had its effect, who are weary and heavy laden with the burden of ſin; be not diſcouraged; the ſeeds of conſolation are ſown in your grief; this weeping night ſhall ere long be ſucceeded by a joyful morning; and " upon you who" thus " fear " his name, ſhall the Sun of righteouſneſs" ſhortly " ariſe with healing in his wings:" For this gracious temper is the peculiar work of the Spirit of God;—it is he who brings that light into the ſoul, whereby its natural deformity is ſeen; it is he who caſts down thoſe proud imaginations which exalt themſelves againſt God, and hide from the ſinner his poverty and wretchedneſs: and it is this divine Spirit, who, by the miniſtry of the law, removes thoſe falſe grounds of hope upon which the ſinner was accuſtomed to lean, and obligeth him to aſk that intereſting queſtion, " What ſhall I do to " be ſaved?"——As John Baptiſt prepared the way for Chriſt's public appearance, by rouſing the world with the doctrine of repentance;

pentance; in like manner, the Holy Spirit prepares the heart for the reception of the ſame glorious Redeemer, by ſuch painful and humbling convictions, as render him both neceſſary and deſirable to the ſoul: And therefore it ought to be matter of joy and thankfulneſs to the ſinner, when God ſmites his heart with a ſenſe of ſin; of ſuch ſickneſs, it may truly be ſaid, "This ſick-"neſs is not unto death, but for the glory "of God." Hereby, as it were, he diſlodges his enemies, and empties the ſoul of every other gueſt, that he may come and fill it with his own gracious preſence.

Lift up your heads, then, O trembling ſinners! look forward but a very little way, and you may ſee to the end of that dark valley, through which you are now paſſing. This road became neceſſary after man's apoſtacy; and it is the kindneſs, not the anger, of your heavenly Father, that hath brought you into it. Had your deſtruction been pleaſing to him, he would have ſuffered you to walk, without diſturbance, in the broad way that leads to deſtruction: but by alarming your fears, he plainly intends to

prevent your ruin; and the preſent taſte he hath given you of the bitterneſs of ſin, is graciouſly meant to divorce your hearts from the love of it, and to render the remedy which he offers more welcome and precious in your eſteem.——For let it be obſerved, as a further ground of encouragement, that the goſpel-call is particularly addreſſed to perſons of this character: "Come unto me," ſays the bleſſed Jeſus, "all ye that labour "and are heavy laden, and I will give you "reſt." And herein he exactly fulfils the appointment of his Father, and acts in the moſt perfect conformity to the commiſſion he received from him; of which we have a fair copy, *Iſaiah* lxi.——at the beginning: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, "becauſe the Lord hath anointed me to "preach good tidings to the meek, he hath "ſent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to "proclaim liberty to the captives, and the "opening of the priſon to them that are "bound."——From this paſſage, it plainly appears, that humble convinced ſouls are his peculiar charge: he is the phyſician, not of the whole, but of the ſick; not of thoſe that

juſtify

juſtify themſelves, but of thoſe who are periſhing in their own apprehenſion, who feel their need of him, and know ſomething of the worth of that ſalvation which he brings.

Let every humble ſinner, then, take comfort from theſe conſiderations. God knoweth the penitent relentings of your hearts: Behold, he ſtands, like the father in the parable, ſtretching forth his arms to every prodigal ſon! he regiſters all your groans, "he put-"teth your tears into his bottle," and, ere long, "he will give you the oil of joy for "mourning, and the garment of praiſe for "your preſent ſpirit of heavineſs." In the mean time, let me recommend to you the following directions, with which I ſhall conclude.

Beware of ſmothering or quenching your convictions. I admit they are bitter, but they are alſo medicinal; and, by the bleſſing of God, ſhall iſſue in that repentance unto ſalvation, which is not to be repented of: whereas, if you ſtifle them at preſent, your hearts may contract a hardneſs and inſenſibility, which, if ever it be cured at all ſhall coſt you more pain and anguiſh than

you preſently feel, or indeed can eaſily imagine.

At the ſame time, beware of drawing deſperate concluſions againſt yourſelves from the diſcoveries you have got of your guilt and danger. I may juſtly ſay to you, what the Apoſtle ſaid in another caſe,—" Mourn " not like thoſe who have no hope." Your caſe, bad as it may ſeem, is certainly better than once it was. Formerly you were out of the way of mercy, now you have got into that very path where mercy meets the elect of God: It was then your ſin to preſume beyond any promiſe; beware now of deſpairing, againſt many commands; but amidſt all your fears and anxieties, ſtill endeavour to keep hope alive in your hearts.

Eſpecially, haſten to the Saviour, who alone can give you reſt. This is the great errand upon which convictions are ſent; for, as I have already obſerved, " the law is our " ſchoolmaſter to bring us to Chriſt,—who " is the end of the law for righteouſneſs to " every one that believeth."—Doth the Lord Jeſus appear precious to your ſouls? do you ſee your abſolute need of him, and his per-

fect

fect ſuitableneſs to your circumſtances? O then, ſpeedily have recourſe to him, and receive him thankfully as the "unſpeakable "gift of God to men!" Embrace him cordially in all the important characters he ſuſtains, as the Prophet, the Prieſt, and the King, of his church; and then ſhall you find, to your preſent comfort, and your everlaſting joy, that he is both "able and will-"ing to ſave to the uttermoſt, all who come "unto God by him." *Amen.*

SER-

SERMON VII.

MATTHEW xi. 28.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt.

IT was propheſied of our Lord long before his manifeſtation in the fleſh, that he ſhould "proclaim liberty to the captives, "and the opening of the priſon to them "that are bound:" And lo! here he doth it in the kindeſt and moſt endearing manner, offering *reſt*, or ſpiritual relief, to every *labouring and heavy laden* ſinner.——*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt.*

In diſcourſing from which words, I propoſe, in dependence upon divine aid,

Firſt, To open the character of thoſe to whom the invitation is addreſſed:

Secondly, To explain the invitation itſelf, and ſhow what is included in *coming*

to

to Chriſt: After which I ſhall endeavour, in the

Third place, To illuſtrate the gracious condeſcending promiſe with which our Lord enforces the call: *I will give you reſt.*

I BEGIN with the character of thoſe to whom the invitation is addreſſed. They are ſuch, you ſee, as *labour and are heavy laden;* that is, who feel the unſupportable load of guilt, and the galling fetters of corrupt affections, and earneſtly long to be delivered from both; for theſe were the perſons whom our Saviour always regarded as the peculiar objects of his attention and care.—By our fatal apoſtacy, we forfeited at once our innocence and our happineſs; we became doubly miſerable, liable to the juſtice of God, and ſlaves to Satan and our own corruptions. But few, comparatively ſpeaking, are ſenſible of this miſery! The bulk of mankind are ſo hot in the purſuit of periſhing trifles, that they can find no leiſure ſeriouſly to examine their ſpiritual condition. Theſe indeed have a load upon them, of weight more than ſufficient to ſink them

them into perdition; but they are not *heavy laden* in the ſenſe of my text. Our Saviour plainly ſpeaks to thoſe who feel their burden, and are groaning under it; otherwiſe the promiſe of reſt, or deliverance, could be no inducement to bring them to him. And the call is particularly addreſſed to ſuch, for two obvious reaſons:

Firſt, Becauſe our Lord knew well that none elſe would comply with it. "The "full ſoul loaths the honey-comb." Such is the pride of our hearts, that each of us would wiſh to be a ſaviour to himſelf, and to purchaſe heaven by his own perſonal merit. This was the "rock of offence" upon which the Jews ſtumbled and fell: they could not bear the thought of being indebted to the righteouſneſs of another for pardon and acceptance with God; for ſo the Apoſtle teſtifies concerning them, (*Rom.* x. 3.), "Being ignorant of God's righteouſneſs, "they went about to eſtabliſh their own "righteouſneſs, and did not ſubmit themſelves unto the righteouſneſs of God." And ſtill this method of juſtifying ſinners is oppoſed and rejected by every "natural "man,"

" man." He feels not his diſeaſe, and therefore treats the phyſician with contempt and ſcorn: whereas the ſoul that is enlightened by the Spirit of God, and awakened to a ſenſe of its guilt and pollution, lies proſtrate before the mercy-ſeat, crying out with Paul when ſtruck to the ground, " Lord, " what wilt thou have me to do?—It was therefore with peculiar ſignificancy, that our Lord introduced his ſermon upon the mount, by adjudging the kingdom of heaven to the " poor in ſpirit," placing humility in the front of all the other graces, as being the entrance into a religious temper, the beginning of the divine life, the firſt ſtep of the ſoul in its return to God.

2*dly*, The *labouring and heavy laden* are particularly diſtinguiſhed; becauſe otherwiſe, perſons in that ſituation, hopeleſs of relief, might be in danger of excluding themſelves from the offer of mercy. If there was only a general call to come to the Saviour, the humble convinced ſoul, preſſed down with a ſenſe of its guilt and depravity, might be ready to object, Surely it cannot be ſuch a worthleſs and wicked creature as

I am, to whom the Lord directs his invitation. And therefore, he "who will not "break the bruiſed reed, nor quench the "ſmoking flax," doth kindly encourage them by this ſpecial addreſs, that the very thing which to themſelves would appear the greateſt obſtacle in the way of mercy, might become the means of aſſuring them, that they are the very perſons for whom mercy is prepared.

Let this then encourage every weary ſelf-condemning ſinner: The greater your guilt appears in your own eye, the greater ground you have to expect relief if you apply for it. Mercy looks for nothing but an affecting ſenſe of the need of mercy. Say not, If my burden were of a leſſer weight, I might hope to be delivered from it; for no burden is too heavy for Omnipotence: he who is "mighty to ſave," can eaſily remove the moſt oppreſſive load; "his blood cleanſeth "from all ſin," and "by him all who be-"lieve, are juſtified from all things."—— This great phyſician did not come to heal ſome ſlight diſtempers, but to cure thoſe inveterate plagues, which none beſides himſelf

ſelf was able to cure. Whatever your diſeaſe be, it ſhall neither reproach his ſkill nor his power; and all that he requires on your part, is a ſubmiſſive temper to uſe the means he preſcribes, with a firm reliance upon their virtue and efficacy. If you are truly convinced, that your guilt is ſo great, and your corruptions ſo ſtrong, that none in heaven or on earth can ſave you from them but Chriſt alone; if you are groaning under the burden of ſin, and can find no reſt till pardoning mercy and ſanctifying grace bring you relief; then are you in the very poſture which my text deſcribes; and I may warrantably ſay unto you what Martha ſaid to Mary, "Ariſe quickly, the "Maſter is come, and calleth for thee." And this is his call, *Come unto me.* Which is the

Second thing I propoſed to explain. Now, for underſtanding this, it will be neceſſary to remind you of the different characters which our Lord ſuſtains; or, in other words, the important offices which he executes as our Redeemer. Theſe, you know, are

are three, to wit, the offices of a Prophet, of a Prieſt, and of a King; in each of which the Lord Jeſus muſt be diſtinctly regarded by every ſoul that comes to him. Accordingly, you may obſerve, that in this gracious invitation, he exhibits himſelf to our view in all theſe characters: for to the condeſcending offer of removing our guilt, he immediately annexes the command, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of "me."

Such is our miſery by the fall, that we are not only become the objects of God's righteous diſpleaſure, and liable to that awful puniſhment which was the penalty of the firſt covenant, but our nature is wholly diſeaſed and corrupted; ſo that "in us, in our fleſh, dwelleth no good "thing." Our underſtanding is darkened, filled with prejudices againſt the truth, and incapable of diſcerning ſpiritual objects: "For the natural man receiveth not the "things of the Spirit of God, they are "fooliſhneſs to him; neither can he know "them, becauſe they are ſpiritually diſ-"cerned." Our will is ſtubborn and rebellious,

bellious, like "an iron ſinew," which no force can bend; ſo inflexible in its oppoſition to the divine law, that it is called in Scripture "enmity againſt God:" and all our affections are wild and ungovernable, deaf to the voice of reaſon and conſcience, in perpetual diſcord among themſelves, and wholly alienated from God, in whom alone they ſhould unite and centre.——Such a Saviour, therefore, was neceſſary for our relief, as could effectually remedy all thoſe evils, and not only redeem us from wrath, but likewiſe prepare us for happineſs, by reſtoring our nature to that original perfection from which it had fallen.

For this end, our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that he might be in all reſpects furniſhed for his great undertaking, was ſolemnly inveſted by his heavenly Father with each of the important offices I have named; that our underſtanding being enlightened by his divine teaching, and our will ſubdued by his regal power, we might be capable of enjoying the fruits of that pardon, which, as our great High-prieſt, he hath purchaſed with his blood.——Now, in all theſe characters, the

Scriptures propoſe him to our faith; and we do not comply with the invitation in my text, unleſs we come to him for the proper work of each office, and embrace him in the full extent of his commiſſion; that "of God "he may be made unto us, wiſdom, and "righteouſneſs, and ſanctification, and re-"demption."

It is true, indeed, that the ſoul, in its firſt approach to Chriſt, doth principally regard him as a prieſt or a ſacrifice; and therefore faith, as it is employed for juſtification, or pardon, is emphatically ſtyled, *Faith in his blood.* To this God looks when he juſtifies the ſinner; he views him as ſprinkled with the blood of atonement: and therefore, to the ſame blood the ſinner muſt neceſſarily look, upon his firſt application to Chriſt.——When the criminal under the law fled to the horns of the altar, he conſidered the temple rather as a place of protection than of worſhip.——The authority of a teacher, and the majeſty of a king, are objects of terror to a ſelf-condemning ſinner, and by no means ſuit his preſent neceſſity. Chriſt, as ſuffering, and "bearing

"our

" our ſins in his own body on the tree," is the only object that can yield him relief and comfort; for where ſhall he find the reſt of his ſoul, but where God found the ſatisfaction of his juſtice?

Nevertheleſs, though Chriſt upon the croſs be the firſt and moſt immediate object of faith, yet the believer doth not ſtop there; but having diſcovered a ſufficient atonement for his guilt, he proceeds to contemplate the other characters of his Redeemer, and heartily approves of them all as perfectly adapted to all his neceſſities. He hearkens to his inſtruction, and cheerfully ſubmits to his yoke, and covets nothing ſo much as to be taught and governed by him. The ingenuity of faith ſpeaketh after this manner:—Seeing Chriſt is my Prieſt to expiate my guilt, it is but juſt and reaſonable that he ſhould be my Prophet to teach me, and my King to rule over me; that as I live by his merits, I ſhould alſo walk by his law.

O bleſſed Jeſus! ſaith the ſoul that comes to him, thou true and living way to the Father! I adore thy condeſcending grace,

in becoming a ſacrifice and ſin-offering for me: and now, encouraged by thy kind invitation, I flee to thee as my only city of refuge; I come to thee "wretched, and "miſerable, and poor, and blind, and na-"ked:"—I have no price to offer thee, no goodneſs at all to recommend me to thy favour: *labouring and heavy laden*, I caſt myſelf at thy feet, and look to thy free mercy alone for the removal of this burden, which, without thy interpoſition, muſt ſink me down to the loweſt hell.——Abhorring myſelf in every view I can take, I embrace thee for my righteouſneſs; ſprinkled with thine atoning blood, I ſhall not fear the deſtroying angel:——Juſtice hath already had its triumph on thy croſs; and therefore I take thy croſs for my ſanctuary.——This is my reſt; and here will I ſtay, for I like it well.

Nor is this my only errand to thee, O thou complete Saviour!——I bring to thee a dark benighted mind to be illuminated with ſaving knowledge.———"Thou haſt "the words of eternal life;" "in thee are "hid all the treaſures of wiſdom:" I therefore

fore reſign my underſtanding to thy teaching; for "no man knoweth the Father but "the Son, and thoſe to whom the Son ſhall "reveal him."

I likewiſe chooſe thee for my Lord and my King; for thou "art altogether lovely," and in every character neceſſary to my ſoul. ——Here are enemies whom none can vanquiſh but thyſelf;—here are corruptions, which nothing leſs than all-conquering grace can ſubdue: I therefore implore thine almighty aid.——Do thou poſſeſs the throne in my heart, and caſt out of it whatever oppoſeth or offendeth thee.——It is thine already by purchaſe;—O make it thine alſo by conqueſt! and perform the whole work of a Saviour upon it.

After this manner doth the believer addreſs himſelf to Chriſt; and thus doth he anſwer the call to *come unto him.* From all which we may learn our duty in this matter. Let every *labouring and heavy laden* ſinner, who hears me this day, ſpeedily betake himſelf to the ſame happy courſe: plead his own call, and humbly claim his gracious protection; flee without delay to his

atoning blood, and cleave to him as the Lord your "righteouſneſs, and your ſtrength." —I ſhall afterwards repreſent to you thoſe ſure grounds of hope which may encourage you to do this: In the mean time, let us conſider

The gracious promiſe with which our Lord enforces the invitation: *I will give you reſt.* This was the

Third thing I propoſed to illuſtrate.

There can be no doubt that the *reſt* here ſpoken of, muſt be, at leaſt, of equal extent with the *burthen*, and include a deliverance from every cauſe of trouble to the ſoul. But this ſubject is an ocean without bottom or ſhore; we cannot meaſure the length or breadth of it, neither can its depth be fathomed; for "the riches of Chriſt are unſearchable;" and ſurely no tongue can expreſs what the mind itſelf is unable to comprehend. Nevertheleſs, I ſhall attempt to ſay a few things which may be of uſe to help forward your comfort and joy, till eternity ſhall unfold the whole to your view.

Doth

Doth the guilt of ſin, and the curſe of the law, lie heavy upon thy ſoul? "Behold "the Lamb of God which taketh away the "ſin of the world." In the ſacrifice of Chriſt there is an infinite merit that can never be exhauſted. He hath ſatisfied the moſt extenſive demands of juſtice, and purchaſed a full and everlaſting indemnity to every penitent believing ſinner: ſo that "now there is no condemnation to them "which are in Chriſt Jeſus." No ſooner doth a ſoul *come* to him in the manner I deſcribed, than it "paſſeth from death to life." He ſpreads his righteouſneſs over it, and, under that covering, preſents it to his heavenly Father: from that happy moment it is no longer under the law, but under grace: "For Chriſt hath redeemed us from the "curſe of the law, by his being made a "curſe for us." —— And what a plentiful ſource of conſolation is this! Well may the ſinner "be of good cheer," to whom Chriſt hath ſaid, "Thy ſins are forgiven "thee."

Do you feel a law in your members warring againſt the law of your mind?

Are you haraſſed with temptations, and ſo environed with "a body of death," that you are made to cry out, as Paul once did, "O wretched man, who ſhall deliver me!" Look up to that Prince and Saviour, whom God hath exalted, not only to give remiſſion of ſins, but likewiſe to beſtow repentance upon his people, and grace to help them in every time of need. Chriſt hath obtained the Holy Spirit, by whoſe almighty aid the Chriſtian can do all things. He will plant that immortal ſeed in your hearts, which ſhall gradually kill the weeds of corruption: ſo that, according to his faithful word of promiſe, though ſin may lodge and fight within you, yet it ſhall not be able to get "dominion over you."

Do you fear that ſome unforeſeen cauſe may provoke him to forſake you, to withdraw his love, and the communications of his grace? Know that "the gifts and "calling of God are without repentance." —Chriſt is the "good ſhepherd, who carries "the lambs in his boſom;" and therefore they cannot periſh, becauſe none is ſtrong enough to pluck them out of his hand.

The

The believer is not left to ſtand by himſelf; he who is the author, is likewiſe the finiſher of his people's faith. Omnipotence is their guardian; and they are "kept," not by their own ſtrength, but "by the "power of God, through faith unto ſalva-"tion."

Theſe three are ſurely the *heavieſt burdens* with which the ſoul of man can be oppreſſed; and you ſee that the Lord Jeſus is able to remove them all. —— There are, no doubt, many other cauſes of diſcouragement to which we are liable, ſo long as we ſojourn in this valley of tears; but as none of them are equal to thoſe I have already named, we may certainly conclude, that he who performs the greater work, can, with infinite eaſe, perform the leſſer alſo. And indeed, if I might ſtay upon this branch of the ſubject, it would be no difficult taſk to ſhow, that in all other reſpects believers "are complete in "Chriſt," and may by faith derive from him whatever is neceſſary either for their ſafety or comfort in this world: "For it "hath pleaſed the Father, that in him "ſhould

" ſhould all fulneſs dwell," as it is written, *Coloſſ.* i. 19.

But if we would behold the *reſt* here ſpoken of in its utmoſt extent, and higheſt perfection, we muſt look above us to that heavenly world, from which ſin, and all the painful effects of it, are eternally excluded. " There remaineth a reſt," ſaid the Apoſtle, " for the people of God." Great and manifold are their privileges even in this world; but beyond all theſe, are ſtill more glorious and enriching bleſſings that await them in the next, which our " ears " have not yet heard, neither can our hearts " conceive."——When we attempt to think of that exalted happineſs, we can do little more than remove from it in our minds all thoſe afflicting evils and grounds of diſcouragement which we preſently feel: only we muſt conclude, that whatever the particular ingredients are, the happineſs itſelf muſt be, in all reſpects, worthy of its glorious Author, and proportioned to the infinite price that was paid for it. Our Lord himſelf calls it a " kingdom," nay, a " kingdom prepared from the foundation

" of

" of the world ;" and the Apoſtle Peter hath recorded three of its diſtinguiſhing properties, (1 *Peter* i. 4.), where he ſtyles it an " inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and " that fadeth not away."

Such, my brethren, is that reſt which Chriſt will finally beſtow upon his people. They ſhall " enter into the joy of their " Lord." All their burdens ſhall drop with their natural bodies ; none of them can paſs beyond the grave. Then faith and hope ſhall become ſight and enjoyment ; then love grown perfect ſhall caſt out fear ; and nothing ſhall remain of all their former trials, but the grateful remembrance of that friendly hand which ſupported them, and hath at length crowned their " light and momentary afflictions," with a " far more exceeding and eternal weight of " glory."

And now, in the review of all that has been ſaid, methinks every ſinner who hears me ſhould be ready to anſwer the call of my text in the language of Peter, " Lord, " to whom ſhall we go but unto thee ? " for

" for thou haſt the words of eternal life." ——O that there were ſuch hearts in us! ——But perhaps ſome humble ſoul may ſay, Gladly would I go to this Saviour, willingly would I throw myſelf at his feet and implore his protection; but ſuch, alas! is my vileneſs and unworthineſs, ſo long have I ſlighted his offers and abuſed his grace, that I fear this call, kind as it is, doth not extend to me: my caſe is ſingularly bad, and my ſins have been aggravated to ſuch a degree, that my deſponding heart hath already pronounced the ſentence of condemnation; and the doom appears ſo juſt, ſo righteous, that I can ſee no ground to hope that ever it ſhall be reverſed.—For removing this obſtacle, which ſeems to lie in the way of your return to Chriſt, let me beg your attention to the following particulars.

Conſider the great condeſcenſion of this Redeemer. While he was upon earth, he never rejected any who ſought relief from him: like a ſanctuary whoſe gates ſtand continually open, he gave free undebarred acceſs to all, inſomuch that his enemies, by

by way of reproach, ſtyled him *the friend of publicans and ſinners.*——Neither did our Lord diſown the character: on the contrary, he gloried in it, and proclaimed it openly to the world; declaring, upon all proper occaſions, that " he was come to " ſeek, and to ſave, that which was loſt." For this end, he aſſumed our nature; for this end, he ſuffered and died; and upon the ſame benevolent deſign, he is now gone up to heaven, " where he appears " in the preſence of God for us;"—" that " if any man ſin, he may have an Advo- " cate with the Father," to ſolicit his pardon, and to plead his cauſe.——And may not theſe diſcoveries of his merciful nature expel your fears, and revive your hope? Has he in a manner laid aſide the majeſty of a ſovereign, and put on the mild and amiable aſpect of a tender-hearted ſympathiſing friend? and may not this by itſelf encourage you to draw near to him, and to claim the bleſſings of that *reſt* he hath obtained for his people?

But, lo, he hath prevented you even in this: for to all the proofs of his good-will

to

to men, he ſuperadds the moſt warm and preſſing invitations, to come to him for relief from all their burdens.——" In " the laſt day, the great day of the feaſt, " Jeſus ſtood and cried, If *any man* thirſt, " let him come unto me, and drink."—— " Behold," ſaid he to the degenerated church of the Laodiceans, " Behold, I " ſtand at the door, and knock: If *any* " *man* will hear my voice, and open the " door, I will come in to him, and ſup " with him, and he with me." And in the concluding chapter of the Revelation, it is written, " The Spirit and the bride " ſay, Come: and let him that is a-thirſt, " come: and *whoſoever will*, let him " come, and take the water of life freely." ——So that you ſee my text is not a ſingular inſtance of condeſcenſion; the Scriptures are repleniſhed with invitations of the ſame kind; and they are all expreſſed in the moſt extenſive and abſolute terms, on purpoſe, as it were, to obviate every poſſible objection, and to remove all jealouſy from the moſt deſponding ſinners,

who

who might otherwiſe have ſuſpected that the call did not reach ſo far as them.

But leſt the offer of a Saviour, when viewed as a privilege, might ſtill appear in the eyes of ſome a privilege too high for them to aſpire to, therefore it hath pleaſed the Father to interpoſe his authority, and to make it our duty to embrace the offer: as we learn from that remarkable paſſage, (1 *John* iii. 23.),——" This is the *command* " of God, that we ſhould believe on the " name of his Son Jeſus Chriſt."——So that faith in Chriſt becomes an act of obedience; the law of the Supreme Governor is the ſinner's warrant to come to the Saviour; and therefore it can be no preſumption in any, however guilty they have been, to flee to this city of refuge, ſeeing he who hath appointed it, not only permits, but peremptorily *commands* them to repair to it.

And to crown all, our Lord himſelf hath declared in the moſt ſolemn manner, that none ſhall be rejected who come to him for ſalvation.——Theſe are his words (*John* vi. 37.) " Him that cometh to me I will in no " wiſe

" wiſe caſt out." I will receive him with out-ſtretched arms; I will tenderly embrace and cheriſh him, and ſo unite him to myſelf, that the combined force of earth and hell ſhall never be able to diſſolve the union, or to ſeparate his ſoul from my unchangeable love.

Lift up thy head, then, O *labouring and heavy laden* ſinner! ponder, with due attention, thoſe grounds of encouragement I have briefly ſuggeſted. Doth the Father *command* you to believe on his Son? doth the Lord Jeſus invite, nay intreat, you, to come to him, and at the ſame time aſſure you that " he will in no wiſe " caſt you out?" and ſhall not this multiplied ſecurity remove all your doubts, and bring you to him with a humble, but ſtedfaſt, hope of obtaining that *reſt* which he offers unto you? —— Say not henceforth, My burden is ſo heavy, and my guilt ſo great, that I dare not go to him; but rather ſay, My burden is ſo heavy, that I *muſt* go to him; for no other arm can remove it but his own. He offers you his help, becauſe you are miſerable; he

he invites you to come to him, not becauſe you deſerve, but becauſe you need his aid. Ariſe then, O ſinners! and obey his call: caſt your burden upon him who is mighty to ſave; yield yourſelves, without reſerve, to this faithful Redeemer, to be juſtified by his blood, and ſanctified by his Spirit; "take "his yoke upon you, and learn of him;" and then you ſhall find *reſt* to your ſouls.

But what ſhall I ſay to thoſe who have never as yet felt the burden of ſin? who, amidſt the deepeſt poverty and wretchedneſs, imagine themſelves to be "rich, "and increaſed with goods, and to ſtand "in need of nothing?"———Alas! my friends, what can we do for ſuch?——Shall I denounce the curſes of a broken covenant to alarm their fears?——Shall I publiſh the terrors of the Lord, and by theſe perſuade them to flee from the wrath to come?—— Indeed, conſiderations of this kind ſeem proper and neceſſary, to rouſe them from that deadly ſleep into which they are caſt.—— And believe it, O ſinners! that no repreſentations of this ſort, however awful they

might appear, could exceed, or even equal, the dreadful reality; "for who knoweth the "power of God's anger?"

But as my text breathes nothing but love and clemency, I ſhall rather, upon this occaſion, "beſeech you by the meekneſs and "gentleneſs of Chriſt," and fetch my arguments from the endearing condeſcenſions of his mercy and grace.

Know then, O ſinners! that, after all the contempt you have thrown upon him, he is ſtill willing to become your Saviour. Ungrateful as you have been, he once more opens his arms, and invites you to come unto him.——He ſends us forth this day, to call after you in his name, and to intreat you in his ſtead to be reconciled to God.———Behold, in the goſpel-offer, he lays, as it were, his crucified body in your way, to ſtop you in your ſelf-deſtroying courſe.——And will you ſtill preſs onward, "and trample under foot the Son of God?" ——Behold, his blood, like a mighty river, flows between you and the place of torment:—And will you force your paſſage to the everlaſting burnings through

this

this immenſe ocean of redeeming love?——O ſinners, think of this! all who periſh under the goſpel muſt carry this dreadful aggravation along with them, That mercy was in their offer, and they would not accept it; nay, that they inſulted and abuſed the mercy that would have ſaved them.—And "can your hearts endure, or can your "hands be ſtrong, in the day that God "ſhall deal with you" for this contempt?——For the Lord's ſake, open your eyes in time; look upon him whom you have pierced by your ſins, and mourn.—I addreſs you as the angels did Lot, when they brought him forth from Sodom; "Eſcape "for thy life, look not behind thee, neither "ſtay thou in all the plain:" Flee to the Saviour, "leſt thou be conſumed."

As for you who have already got within the walls of the city of refuge, I have one requeſt to make to you, with which I ſhall conclude *.——Come now and receive the new teſtament in Chriſt's blood:

* This, and the four Sermons that immediately follow, were preached at the celebration of our Lord's Supper.

—For confirming your faith, and increasing your joy, he hath instituted this visible pledge of his love, this external seal of his gracious covenant; that, by the elements of bread and wine, the appointed symbols of his broken body and shed blood, he might invest his people with a full and unalterable right to all the blessed fruits of his sufferings and death.——And therefore, as you have come to Christ himself, you may lawfully consider the invitation in my text as your warrant and call to come to his table; and may hope to find, in this holy sacrament, something of that *rest*, or spiritual relief, which he is always ready to dispense to those who feel their need of it, and who know its worth. *Amen.*

SER-

SERMON VIII.

ZECHARIAH ix. 12.

Turn ye to the ſtrong hold, ye priſoners of hope; even to-day do I declare, that I will render double unto thee.

IN the 9th verſe of this chapter, proclamation is made, that the Meſſiah is at hand; and the church is called upon to go forth, and to meet him with joy. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; ſhout, "O daughter of Jeruſalem: behold, thy "King cometh unto thee." And that the awe of his majeſty might be no bar to their joy, they are told, for their encouragement, that he comes in ſuch a form of condeſcenſion and grace, as ſerves rather to invite, than forbid their approach to him: For, "He is juſt, and having ſalvation; "lowly, and riding upon an aſs, and upon "a colt, the fole of an aſs."——They are

further, assured, in the 10th verse, that as the ensigns of his royalty differ so widely from those which earthly monarchs use, so he shall govern his subjects, and subdue his enemies, not by external force, but by inward persuasion; not by "the chariot, "the horse, and the battle-bow;" for all these shall be "cut off;" but by the preaching of the gospel, accompanied with the powerful operation of his Spirit, which is emphatically called "speaking peace un-"to the Heathen:" in consequence whereof, "his dominion shall extend from sea "to sea, and from the river even to the "ends of the earth." ——And to finish the description of this King of Zion, it is added, in the 11th verse, that the gracious aim of his government is, to set men at liberty from the vilest slavery, and to release them from the most ignominious confinement, by opening their prison-doors, and "sending them forth out of the pit "wherein is no water."——This too he is to perform in a way peculiarly endearing: he is to purchase their freedom with the price of his own blood; which, with great propriety,

propriety, is ſtyled " the blood of the co-
" venant," as it ratifies and confirms that covenant of grace, whereby ſinners are reinſtated in the favour of God, and reſcued from the power of all their ſpiritual enemies.

The like repreſentation is given of the Meſſiah, *Iſaiah* xlii. 6. 7. " I the Lord have
" called thee in righteouſneſs, and will hold
" thine hand, and will keep thee, and give
" thee for a covenant of the people, for a
" light of the Gentiles; to open the blind
" eyes, to bring out the priſoners from the
" priſon, and them that ſit in darkneſs out
" of the priſon-houſe." And the Meſſiah himſelf is introduced, *Iſaiah* lxi. at the beginning, ſpeaking to the ſame purpoſe, ſaying,—" The ſpirit of the Lord God is upon
" me, becauſe the Lord hath anointed me
" to preach good tidings unto the meek, he
" hath ſent me to bind up the broken-
" hearted, to proclaim liberty to the cap-
" tives, and the opening of the priſon to
" them that are bound."

In all theſe paſſages, he is plainly pointed out to us in the character of a Redeemer;

and as ſuch, he iſſues forth the proclamation in my text: *Turn ye to the ſtrong hold, ye priſoners of hope; even to-day do I declare, that I will render double unto thee.*

In which words we have three things that deſerve our notice.

Firſt, A deſcription of the perſons whom he comes to redeem:—They are *priſoners of hope.*

2*dly*, The advice or command addreſſed to them: — *Turn ye to the ſtrong hold.* And,

3*dly*, A gracious and encouraging promiſe:—*Even to-day do I declare, that I will render double unto thee.*

I propoſe, God willing, to make a few remarks upon each of theſe particulars, and to conclude with an improvement ſuited to the occaſion of our preſent meeting.

Firſt, The perſons to whom the command is addreſſed, are called *priſoners of hope.*

The deſcription, you ſee, is of a mixed nature; it repreſents a ſtate in the main bad, yet not ſo wholly bad as to be paſt recovery.

covery. We are all by nature in a ſtate of bondage, condemned by the righteous ſentence of the law, and ſlaves to Satan and our own corruptions. —— By our apoſtaſy from God, we ſunk into a pit, where indeed " there is no water:"—There we ſit " in darkneſs, and in the ſhadow of death," deſtitute of every thing that can afford real peace and joy to the ſoul.——But though this pit doth not yield any water, yet water may be brought into it. The dew of divine grace may deſcend upon the priſoners, and " the day-ſpring from on high" may viſit their dark abode, and guide them out of it into the way of peace and ſafety.——Hence unconverted ſinners, though *priſoners*, may properly be called *priſoners of hope*, ſo long as their life is continued upon earth. —— It is true, that if death ſurpriſe them in that ſtate, they ſhall then ſink lower into another pit; of which it may be ſaid, with an awful emphaſis, that *there*—" there is no " water:" — it yields none; — it admits of none;—not one drop can be brought into it to cool the tongue.—But ſo long as they live, their caſe, though bad, is by no means hopeleſs;

hopeleſs; there is virtue enough in "the "blood of the covenant" to ſave them; and though they are advanced to the laſt ſtage of impiety, yet even there Almighty grace can reach them, and ſnatch them like brands out of the burning.——So that under this general denomination of *priſoners of hope*, every man or woman living upon earth is ſpoken to in my text.——And indeed the goſpel-call is addreſſed to ſinners indefinitely:—"Unto you, O men, I call," ſays the Saviour, "and my voice is to the "ſons of men."—"Look unto me, and be "ſaved, all ye ends of the earth."——None are excluded from the offers of mercy: he invites all to come unto him; and "him "who cometh, he will in no wiſe caſt "out."

But more particularly, the deſcription ſeems to point at thoſe who feel their miſery, and earneſtly look and long for deliverance.——Many, alas! are lying in the pit of an unconverted ſtate, without any ſenſe or feeling of their woe; the darkneſs is ſo thick around them, that they ſee not the fetters by which they are bound.——

Now,

Now, ſuch muſt neceſſarily put away from themſelves every offer of liberty, ſaying, in the ſcornful language of the Phariſees, "We be Abraham's ſeed, and were never "in bondage to any man: how ſayeſt thou "then, Ye ſhall be made free?"—I therefore reckon, that ſenſible ſinners, humble convinced ſouls, are ſpoken to for their encouragement under this deſignation of *priſoners of hope*, not only to diſtinguiſh them from thoſe who are gone to the pit where there is no hope; but even from others, who, though they ſtill dwell in the land of hope, yet, in ſome reſpects, may be reputed in a hopeleſs condition; becauſe their pride and inſenſibility put them out of the way of help and deliverance. Whereas they who have got an affecting view of their guilt and miſery, lie, as it were, in the very road of mercy; nay, the more painful their feelings are, the greater likelihood there is of a gracious and ſpeedy relief: He whoſe office it is "to bind up the broken-hearted, "and to proclaim liberty to the captives," will neither deny them his aid, nor defer their relief one moment beyond the time he

he knows to be beſt for them. And therefore ſinners of this ſort may, with peculiar propriety, be called *priſoners of hope*; becauſe, whatever their own apprehenſions are, Chriſt certainly looks upon them as his proper charge, and invites them to caſt all their burdens upon himſelf, in theſe ſweet condeſcending words, "Come unto me, all ye "that labour and are heavy laden, and I "will give you reſt."

By *priſoners of hope*, then, we may underſtand, more generally, all ſinners, without exception, who are within the reach of divine mercy; and more eſpecially thoſe who are ſuing for mercy, under the felt burden of ſin and miſery.

But I add further, that even they who have obtained mercy, ſeem likewiſe to be included in the deſcription of my text.—— The connection of this with the preceding verſe, leads me to this remark; and, I apprehend, lays a ſolid foundation for it; for the perſons who are ſpoken *to* in this verſe, are evidently the ſame who were ſpoken *of* in the preceding one; and yet here they are denominated *priſoners of hope*, though juſt

juſt before it was ſaid of them, " that by " the blood of the covenant they were ſent " forth out of the pit wherein is no water;" that is, cleanſed from their guilt, and delivered from the darkneſs and miſery of an unconverted ſtate.

I need not obſerve to you, that the preſent condition of believers upon earth, is neither a ſtate of perfect liberty, nor of uninterrupted peace. Theſe are the bleſſed ingredients which conſtitute the happineſs of the Zion above; but whilſt they ſojourn in this ſtrange land, they are liable to various and painful diſtreſſes.——Even after they have received " the Spirit of adoption," they may feel ſuch returns of the " ſpirit " of bondage," as ſhall oblige them to cry out with David,—" My ſpirit is overwhelm- " ed within me:—Attend unto my cry, O " God, for I am brought very low:—Bring " my ſoul out of priſon, that I may praiſe " thy name."

The remembrance of paſt guilt, the preſent feeling of indwelling corruption, the hidings of God's face, and the aſſaults and buffetings of their ſpiritual enemies, are all

ſo

ſo many different priſons, in which the deareſt of God's children may be ſhut up for a ſeaſon. And we find ſome of them recorded in holy writ, who, during the time of this ſpiritual confinement, have felt ſuch exquiſite agony, that with difficulty they have been kept from razing the foundation, and quitting all hope.—Such was the caſe of Aſaph when he thus expreſſed himſelf in the 77th Pſalm: "I remembered God, and "was troubled:—I am ſo troubled, that I "cannot ſpeak.—Will the Lord caſt off for "ever? will he be favourable no more? Is "his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his "promiſe fail for evermore? Hath God for-"gotten to be gracious? hath he in anger "ſhut up his tender mercies?"—— And how diſtreſſing muſt we ſuppoſe the caſe of Heman to have been, when it drew from him ſuch mournful complaints as theſe:—"My "ſoul is full of trouble, and my life draw-"eth nigh unto the grave:—Thou haſt laid "me in the loweſt pit, in darkneſs, in the "deeps:—Lord! why caſteſt thou off my "ſoul? why hideſt thou thy face from me? "I am afflicted, and ready to die from my "youth

" youth up: while I ſuffer thy terrors, I am " diſtracted; thy fierce wrath goeth over " me; thy terrors have cut me off."

Theſe ſtrong examples are ſufficient to prove, that there are other priſons beſides the pit of an unconverted ſtate: Priſons where thoſe who are near and dear to God, may, for wiſe and holy reaſons, ſuffer a temporary confinement; on account of which they may be juſtly denominated *priſoners of hope.*

And if ſo, then my text ſpeaks directly to every ſoul in this aſſembly; and the advice it gives to each of you is this:

Turn ye to the ſtrong hold, ye priſoners of hope. And this is the

Second branch of the ſubject, which I am now to conſider.

By the *ſtrong hold* to which we are exhorted to turn, is undoubtedly meant " the " blood of the covenant," ſpoken of in the preceding verſe; or rather the new covenant itſelf, ratified and ſealed by the blood of Chriſt.

This indeed is a *ſtrong hold*, an impregnable

nable defence to all who flee to it for refuge: It is "an everlaſting covenant, ordered in all things and ſure."—Here an effectual ſupply is to be found for all the ſinner's wants and neceſſities;—an infinite ſacrifice to expiate his guilt;—all-conquering grace to ſubdue his corruptions;—unerring wiſdom to guide him:—irreſiſtible power to protect him;—unbounded goodneſs to relieve his preſent needs, and to crown him with glory and happineſs hereafter.—In ſhort, "the whole fulneſs of the Godhead" is treaſured up in the Mediator of this covenant; and "he is made of God" unto all who believe on him, "wiſdom, and righteouſneſs, and ſanctification, and redemption."

But inſtead of enlarging upon the deſcription of this *ſtrong hold*, I reckon it of greater importance to explain the advice here given to the *priſoners of hope*, which is the proper work and duty of the day: *Turn ye to the ſtrong hold.*——But how are we to do this?

1ſt, We muſt turn our back upon every thing elſe, and abandon all other means of

of deliverance, as refuges of lies, which will miſerably diſappoint thoſe who expect relief from them.——Particularly, we muſt renounce our own righteouſneſs, and plead guilty in the preſence of a holy God, acknowledging, that we ſtand juſtly condemned by the tenor of the firſt covenant, and are neither able of ourſelves to give any ſatisfaction for paſt offences, nor to yield an acceptable obedience for the future.—" They " that be whole," ſaid our bleſſed Saviour, " need no phyſician, but they that are ſick." —The natural pride of our hearts oppoſeth our ſeeking aid from any thing without ourſelves; nay, ſuch is our diſaffection to the great God, that even when aid appears neceſſary, we would rather be indebted for it to any other than to him.——I believe I may venture to affirm, that the goſpel-ſanctuary is always the ſinner's laſt reſort; and it is not till we are " ſhut up unto the faith," as the Apoſtle expreſſeth it, that is, hedged in on every ſide by an abſolute deſpair of relief from any creature, that we come to think in good earneſt of ſeeking it from Chriſt.——This then is the firſt thing im-

plied in *turning to the ſtrong hold*, that we turn our back upon every thing elſe.—— It further imports, in the

2*d* place, That we turn our eyes to this *ſtrong hold*, and narrowly examine the ſecurity it affords.

The true flight of a ſoul to the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, is not a raſh and precipitate adventure, but the reſult of ſerious and mature deliberation: it is not curioſity, but preſſing neceſſity, that ſets the ſoul in motion. The awakened ſinner ſees the avenger of blood ready to ſeize upon him; and hearing of a *ſtrong hold*, erected by infinite wiſdom and grace, for the protection and ſafety of perſons in his ſituation, he anxiouſly inquires into the truth of this report, and uſeth every means in his power to get certain information of it.

This, my brethren, is an eſſential part of the duty here injoined. —— I cannot tell you of what importance it is to get clear and diſtinct apprehenſions of the goſpel-covenant, that *ſtrong hold* pointed out to us in my text.

We ſhould not only endeavour to know what

what we are allowed to expect from it, but likewise to see the firmness of that foundation upon which our faith and hope must stand. —— A wavering hope may balance a wavering apprehension of danger, but will not answer the necessities of an awakened sinner. But when we come to see that this *strong hold* is built upon the Rock of ages, and supported by pillars of invincible strength, even all the perfections of an unchangeable God;—or, to drop the allusion, when we see that this covenant, which promises every blessing we need, is a sure, a permanent, and irrevocable deed, confirmed by the oath of the great *I AM*, and sealed with the blood of his own dear Son, "in "whom all the promises are yea and amen:" here the soul finds something to lean upon; its anxious fears begin to vanish; it now knows with certainty where relief is to be found.

Having thus discovered the stability of the covenant, and that it is in all respects such a *strong hold* as we need, the

3*d* and principal thing required is, That

we actually flee to it, and improve it for all the purpoſes for which it was intended.

The two former advices I gave you, were only preparatory to this laſt and moſt important ſtep, which is the ſum and ſubſtance of the duty here enjoined, *Turn ye to the ſtrong hold, ye priſoners of hope.*

You who are lying in the priſon of an unconverted ſtate, come hithert o this ſanctuary, whoſe gates ſtand open to receive you: "It is a faithful ſaying, and worthy "of all acceptation, that Jeſus Chriſt came "into the world to ſave ſinners:" He hath ſhed that blood which "cleanſeth from all "ſin," and hath ſealed that gracious and well-ordered covenant, which offers pardon and eternal life to every penitent believing ſinner. — And now "all things are ready" for your reception and entertainment: The Father is ready to embrace you; Chriſt is ready to waſh you in his blood; the Spirit is ready to heal your diſeaſed natures; angels are ready to rejoice at your return; and we, as the ſervants of this King of Zion, are ready to welcome you into the family of God, and do now exhort and pray you,

you, in Chriſt's ſtead, " to flee for refuge, " to lay hold on the hope ſet before you." This is the call of my text to unconverted ſinners.

As to the other *priſoners of hope* I ſpoke of, who, though they are reſcued from the pit wherein is no water, yet find their ſouls caſt down within them, and, by reaſon of various diſcouragements, cannot enjoy " the liberty wherewith Chriſt hath made " them free :"

The call to you is, *Turn* again *to the ſtrong hold*, and once more look to " the Rock " that is higher than you."—The Redeemer in whom you truſt, is mighty to ſave ; " all " power is committed to him in heaven and " in earth ;" and he is conſtituted " head " over all things for his church."——" It " hath pleaſed the Father, that in him all " fulneſs ſhould dwell ;" and the whole fulneſs of the Godhead is treaſured up in him, for this very end, that he may diſpenſe to his people ſuch gracious ſupplies as their various caſes and circumſtances may require. Ye are not ſtraitened in him, be not " ſtraitened in your own bowels."

Might I ſtay to examine your particular complaints, I believe I could ſhow you that there is ſomething in the covenant to anſwer them all. He who brought you out of the pit of an unconverted ſtate, can eaſily deliver you from every other priſon. What furnace can conſume thoſe who are ſprink'ed with that blood which hath already quenched the fire of incenſed juſtice? He who "bore your ſins in his own body "upon the tree," will not ſuffer you to ſink under the weight of them: He who "ſuf-"fered, being tempted," will certainly ſuccour you who are tempted:—He who, under the hidings of his Father's face, cried out upon the croſs, "My God! my God! "why haſt thou forſaken me?" cannot fail to ſympathiſe with his people in the like circumſtances;—and he whoſe own "ſoul "was exceeding ſorrowful, even unto death," will, in due time, communicate that joy to you, the want of which was ſo painful to himſelf. If Chriſt is indeed precious in your eſteem; if you can ſay, without known guile, that your whole dependence is upon him, and him alone; then know, that he

is

is equal to all the truſt you can put in him, and he is faithful who hath ſaid,—*Even to-day do I declare, that I will render double unto thee.* And this is the

Third and *laſt* branch of the text. Upon which I ſhall offer a very few remarks, and then conclude.

1ſt, I would obſerve, that the promiſe itſelf is moſt gracious, *I will render double unto thee.* We meet with the ſame expreſſion, *Iſaiah* lxi. 7. where I think the meaning of it is plainly aſcertained: "For your "ſhame ye ſhall have double; and for con-"fuſion they ſhall rejoice in their portion: "therefore in their land they ſhall poſſeſs "the double: everlaſting joy ſhall be unto "them."———The chapter is introduced with that grand deſcription of the Meſſiah's office, which I formerly quoted:——"The "ſpirit of the Lord God is upon me," &c. ——The redemption of the Jews from the Babyloniſh captivity, and their return to their own land, appear from the ſequel of the chapter to have been the events which the Prophet had more immediately in his

eye. But we ſhall not be able to doubt that he looked a great deal farther, even to that ſpiritual redemption which Chriſt was to atchieve for his church, if we turn over to the 4th chapter of *Luke*, 21ſt verſe, where our bleſſed Lord, after reading this paſſage in the ſynagogue at Nazareth, made particular application of it to himſelf, in theſe remarkable words:——" This day is this " Scripture fulfilled in your ears."——— Hence it is obvious, that what the Prophet ſays in the 7th verſe, *viz.* for " your ſhame " ye ſhall have double," &c. falls to be underſtood in a ſpiritual ſenſe too; and the meaning of it is, that the ranſomed of the Lord ſhall not only be freed from bondage, and reſcued from the hands of their ſpiritual enemies, but ſhall likewiſe be advanced to ſuch honour and happineſs, as ſhall wipe off all the ſhame of their ſervitude, and fill them with the moſt tranſporting joy.

In the 90th *Pſalm*, at the 15th verſe, Moſes, the man of God, prays for the church in theſe terms: " Make us glad, *according* " to the days wherein thou haſt afflicted " us, and the years wherein we have ſeen " grief."

" grief."——He only aſks joy *in proportion to* the grief they had felt:—but the bounty of our gracious Lord doth far exceed the prayers and expectations of his ſervants; for here he ſays, I will render unto thee, not barely *according* to, or in proportion to thy former ſufferings, but I will render *double* unto thee.—Even in this life, he may pour into your ſouls ſuch meaſures of joy and conſolation, as ſhall not only balance your paſt ſorrows, but far outweigh them, and cauſe them to appear very light and inconſiderable.—At any rate, he will render unto you *double* in another world:—all tears ſhall there be wiped away from your eyes;—your light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are, in the mean time, working for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;—and, ere long, " you " ſhall return and come to Zion, with ſongs " and everlaſting joy upon your heads;— " then ſhall you obtain joy and gladneſs, and " ſorrow and ſighing ſhall flee away."

I would further obſerve to you, in the 2*d* place, That the comfort of this promiſe is greatly heightened by the manner of

of publiſhing it: *Even to-day do I declare.* It is uttered with great ſolemnity, and expreſſed in the moſt reſolved and peremptory manner.—I do not ſay it ſlightly,—I *declare it*;—I pledge the credit both of my power and faithfulneſs, to make it good.

The circumſtance of time too makes a remarkable addition.——I declare it *even to-day;*—in this dark and cloudy day, when your miſgiving minds are meditating nothing but terror.——Even on *this day*, when the event is moſt unlikely, I give you the promiſe of complete deliverance;—*to-day*, when your hearts are emptied of ſelf-confidence, when every other refuge fails, I give you my word, my oath, to lay hold upon;—and I do it *to-day*, whilſt your feelings are moſt painful, that the depth of your diſtreſs may help you to form ſome conception of the high joy that awaits you at that happy time when *I ſhall render double unto thee.*

But I apprehend, there is ſtill an emphaſis in theſe words *to-day*, beyond any thing I have yet mentioned.——Here God, as it were, prefixes a date to his promiſe, which,

in

in human obligations, has always been judged an eſſential formality:—as if he had ſaid, Let it be recorded, that *on this day* I have paſſed my word for your ſalvation; for though I need no tokens to remind me of my everlaſting purpoſes of grace,—yet as you need them to ſtrengthen your faith and hope,—therefore, in pity of your weakneſs, I give you every kind of ſecurity you can aſk from one another.—Let it then be remembered, that *to-day, I declare, I will render double unto thee.*

UPON the whole, then, let me once more repeat the call in my text, *Turn ye to the ſtrong hold, ye priſoners of hope.*—Bring all your cares, your doubts, your temptations, to that mighty Saviour, on whom your help is laid.——He hath declared to you, in his word, *that he will render unto you double;* "for what things ſoever "were written aforetime, were written "for our learning, that we, through pa- "tience and comfort of the Scriptures, "might have hope."———The promiſe, though addreſſed to believers many ages ago,

ago, extends even to us; becauſe he who made the promiſe is always "in one "mind;"—"the ſame yeſterday, to-day, "and for ever."——Nay, ſo great is his condeſcenſion, that he is juſt now willing to have it dated afreſh under one of the authentic ſeals of his covenant.

Let us then, my brethren, humbly adore the goodneſs of God which hath provided ſo liberally, for the relief and comfort of the *priſoners of hope*;—and in the entrance to the ſolemn ſervice of this day, let us look up to him who is "the God of hope;" praying in the words which his own Spirit hath indited, that he would "fill us with "all joy and peace in believing, that we "may abound in hope, through the power "of the Holy Ghoſt." *Amen.*

SER-

SERMON IX.

1 PETER, ii. 25.

For ye were as ſheep going aſtray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Biſhop of your ſouls.

HUMILITY is both the ſtrength and beauty of the ſoul; it is its beſt defence, as well as its faireſt ornament. "Happy is the man that feareth always; "but he that hardeneth his heart, ſhall fall "into miſchief:"—"for God reſiſteth the "proud, but giveth grace to the humble." No ſooner had David ſaid, "I ſhall never "be moved," than he ſuddenly experienced a ſad reverſe of fortune, and found cauſe to utter that mournful complaint, "Thou "didſt hide thy face, and I was troubled."

Various means have been employed in every age of the church, to baniſh pride from the hearts of men, and to beget and cheriſh that lowlineſs of mind which becomes dependent guilty creatures. This

was

was the obvious tendency of the moſt ſolemn rites under the old diſpenſation. The annual ſacrifice of the paſchal lamb, beſides its typical uſe, or reference to the great atonement, had likewiſe an important moral ſignification; and the leſſons it taught were *humility* and *gratitude*. "It "ſhall come to paſs," ſaid Moſes, by the command of God, "that when your chil- "dren ſhall ſay unto you, What mean you "by this ſervice? ye ſhall ſay, It is the "ſacrifice of the Lord's paſſover, who "paſſed over the houſes of the children "of Iſrael in Egypt, when he ſmote the "Egyptians, and delivered our houſes." —In like manner, when they brought the firſt fruits as an offering to the Lord, which was another ſolemnity that returned every year, the form of dedication was preſcribed in theſe words, (*Deut.* xxvi. 5, 6, *&c.*) "A Syrian ready to periſh was "my father, and he went down into "Egypt, and ſojourned there with a few, "and became there a nation, great, migh- "ty, and populous. And the Egyptians "evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and "laid

" laid upon us hard bondage. And when " we cried unto the Lord God of our fa- " thers, the Lord heard our voice, and " looked on our affliction, and our labour, " and our oppreſſion. And the Lord " brought us forth out of Egypt, with a " mighty hand, and with an outſtretch- " ed arm, and with great terribleneſs, " and with ſigns, and with wonders. And " he hath brought us into this place, and " hath given us this land, even a land " that floweth with milk and honey. And " now behold, I have brought the firſt " fruits of the land, which thou, O Lord, " haſt given me."

Thus did God train up his ancient people " to ſerve him with reverence, and to re- " joice before him with trembling." Their thank-offerings, as well as their oblations for ſin, obliged them to recogniſe the meanneſs of their original, and the ignominious ſervitude, from which God had redeemed them; and every act of worſhip taught them to ſay, " Who am I, O Lord God, and " what is my houſe, that thou haſt brought " me hitherto?"

The

The ordinances of grace in the New-Teſtament church breathe the ſame ſpirit, and dictate the ſame language; nay, they do it with greater force and energy.

The goſpel-paſſover, which we are this day to celebrate, commemorates a deliverance from ſpiritual thraldom; of which the releaſe of the Jews from the Egyptian yoke, affords but a faint and imperfect emblem.

In thoſe complicated ſufferings which were the price of our redemption, we not only diſcover the unſearchable riches of divine love, but we likewiſe behold the full demerit of ſin, and all the horrors of that miſery into which we had plunged ourſelves by our fatal apoſtaſy: ſo that our triumph in the great ſalvation, by recalling to our minds the low and helpleſs ſtate in which mercy found us, gives check to every ſelf-exalting thought, and conſtrains us to aſcribe to the free and unmerited favour of God, the ſole, the undivided, praiſe of all that we have, or hope to enjoy.

To thoſe views, and to this becoming exerciſe,

exercise, we are naturally led by the words of my text, which have frequently occurred to me as a most proper form of address for introducing communicants to the table of their Lord:——*Ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned to the shepherd and bishop of your souls.*

These two widely different states,—What you *once were* by nature, and what you *now are* by grace,—I propose to illustrate in the sequel of this discourse; from both which we may, with ease and certainty, discover what frame and temper of heart best suit our attendance upon this great Christian solemnity.——Let me then call upon believers in Christ; for to them, and to them only, such language can be addressed: Let me call upon them, in the

First place, Seriously to review their former condition, when *they*, as well as others, *were as sheep going astray.*

The fitness of this similitude to exhibit the natural state of mankind, may justly be inferred from the frequent use that is made of it in the sacred writings.——I shall

nor attempt to trace out the reſemblance in all its extent; but ſome parts of it are ſo ſtriking and expreſſive, that to overlook them altogether, or even ſlightly to regard them, would either betray very groſs inſenſibility, or a perverſe contempt of the divine condeſcenſion.

Thus, a ſheep that hath forſaken the good paſture, and ſtrayed into the parched and barren wilderneſs, preſents to us, in the ſtrongeſt and moſt affecting light, an emblem of indigence, perplexity, and diſappointment.——Now, ſuch is the ſtate of every natural man: "vanity and vexa-"tion of ſpirit," are his portion; he reſembles one "who dreameth, and behold "he eateth; but he awaketh, and his ſoul "is empty." Diſappointed in every purſuit, he goes from place to place, ever repeating the anxious queſtion, *Who will ſhow me any good?* There is a void within him that the world cannot fill; the fleſh, after all the proviſion he can make for it, ſtill cries with "the horſeleech, Give, "give;" and like "the fire or the grave, "never ſaith, It is enough." All the creatures

tures are to him, what the huſks were to the prodigal; they yield a momentary relief, but no real nouriſhment: he endeavours to feed upon them; "but ſtill he hath appe-" tite, his ſoul is faint," and he periſheth with hunger.

Again, this figurative repreſentation denotes a ſtate of danger as well as of indigence and diſſatisfaction. Few animals are beſet with more enemies than ſheep; and perhaps none are poſſeſſed of leſs cunning to elude, or of leſs courage to reſiſt them. Their ſafety depends entirely upon the ſhepherd's care: for if they wander beyond the reach of his protecting arm, they become at once, to every ravenous beaſt, not only a tempting, but an eaſy prey. With what awful preciſion doth this part of the ſimilitude exhibit to us the ſtate of unconverted ſinners! Their ſpiritual enemies are both numerous and mighty; the ſubtilty of the ſerpent, and the ſtrength of the lion, are but faint repreſentations of their craft and power: yet ſuch is the preſumption of carnal men, ſo fatal the ſecurity of thoſe who are far from God,

that, inſtead of avoiding their blood-thirſty foes, they roam without fear through their moſt frequented haunts, and ruſh headlong into thoſe ſnares that are laid for their deſtruction.

Once more: Though ſheep are not the only creatures that are prone to wander, yet it may juſtly be affirmed of them, that they, of all others, diſcover leaſt ſagacity in finding the way back to the place from whence they ſtrayed; ſo that in them we likewiſe behold a proper and moſt deſcriptive emblem of man's helpleſs and impotent ſtate by nature, and of his utter inability, by any efforts of his own, to regain his primeval happineſs and glory.——That the Apoſtle intended to convey this idea, is more than probable, from the form of his expreſſion in the latter part of the verſe; where, ſpeaking of the recovery of wandering ſinners, he doth not ſay, Ye *have returned*, as if by their own ſagacity they had diſcovered their error, and then rectified it by the activity of their own natural powers: but it deſerves our notice, that he puts the word into the paſſive voice, ye

are

are returned; that is, *converted*, or caufed to return; as the fame word is elfewhere rendered. For what our Lord faid to his firft difciples, may be addreffed to believers in every age of the church: "Ye have "not chofen me, but I have chofen you:" —"It is God that worketh in us both to "will and to do, of his good pleafure:"— "By grace we are faved, through faith; "and that not of ourfelves, it is the gift "of God." Nor can any words be conceived more abfolute and decifive than thefe, which were uttered by Chrift himfelf: "No man cometh unto me, except "the Father which hath fent me, draw "him."

In all thefe particulars, the refemblance can be traced with a critical exactnefs. But ftill there remains one other ingredient in man's apoftafy from God, to which the fimilitude, comprehenfive as it is, cannot be extended; the fatal ingredient I mean is *guilt*.

A fheep gone aftray is an object of pity rather than of blame; the owner feels no emotion of anger againft the fimple wan-

derer; he doth not view it as faulty, but as unfortunate: he therefore ſeeks it with anxiety; and when he hath found it, ſo far is he from puniſhing it as a criminal, that he cheriſheth it as a ſufferer, takes it tenderly into his arms, and brings it home with joy. —— Whereas, in our departure from God, every crime is united that can render us loathſome and odious in his ſight. Man's apoſtaſy was the effect, not of weakneſs, but of wilfulneſs: the guilt that lieth upon us is nothing leſs than proud and obſtinate rebellion;—rebellion blackened with the vileſt ingratitude;—unprovoked rebellion againſt the Father of our ſpirits, and the former of our bodies, the God in whom we live, the generous Author of thoſe diſtinguiſhed gifts, which, by the moſt impious abuſe, we have turned into hoſtile weapons againſt himſelf.

Such monſters, my brethren, are all unconverted ſinners. Happy! thrice happy they! of whom it can only be ſaid, Such indeed ye *were;* "but ye are waſhed, ye "are ſanctified, ye are juſtified, in the name "of the Lord Jeſus, and by the ſpirit of "our

" our God."—To you, O believers, my text is addreſſed: look back to the waſte and howling wilderneſs, " to the lions dens, " and the mountains of leopards," where lately you wandered, " hungry and hard " beſtead," ſurrounded with enemies, and unable to reſiſt them.——Now, that you are eſtabliſhed upon that Rock of ages, againſt which the gates of hell ſhall never prevail, it can ſurely do you no harm to caſt your eye downward to the horrible pit, and the miry clay, where you were ready to periſh, when mercy interpoſed, and brought you ſeaſonable relief;—on the contrary, the remembrance of the dangers you have eſcaped, will heighten your gratitude, and only add ſolemnity to your preſent joy, while from the humbling review of what you *were* by nature, I lead you to the contemplation of what you *are* by grace. Which was the

Second thing propoſed in the method:—*Ye are now returned unto the ſhepherd and biſhop of your ſouls.*

The progreſs of a ſinner in his return to

God was formerly deſcribed, when I opened the import of theſe kind invitations, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and "are heavy laden*;" and, "Turn ye to "the ſtrong hold, ye priſoners of hope†." ——My preſent aim is, to comfort the ſouls of thoſe who have already complied with the heavenly call, and to congratulate them upon the happy change that is wrought in their condition. Hail, ye bleſſed of the Lord!

Ye are returned to Him who came from heaven to earth, "to ſeek and to ſave "that which was loſt;" who, though infinitely offended by your criminal apoſtaſy, hath himſelf made atonement for your paſt wanderings, and expiated your guilt with his own precious blood; "He was wound-"ed for your tranſgreſſions, and bruiſed "for your iniquities, that by his ſtripes "ye might be healed." "This is that "good ſhepherd, who laid down his life "for the ſheep;"—who "was made ſin "for us, though he knew no ſin, that we "might be made the righteouſneſs of God "in

* Serm. vii. † Serm. viii.

" in him;"—who " ſuffered, the juſt for " the unjuſt, that he might bring us to " God," with filial boldneſs, in the humble, yet aſſured hope, that we ſhall " obtain " mercy, and find grace to help in every " time of need."

Ye are *returned* to Him,—who not only bore your griefs, and carried your ſorrows, but hath likewiſe conquered all your enemies, and triumphed over them, as the choſen head and repreſentative of his people. He hath in his own perſon " ſpoiled prin- " cipalities and powers;" and his ſucceſs is a pledge of your final victory over them. Annoy you they may, but they cannot hurt you; by the blood of the Lamb you likewiſe ſhall overcome. Ere long " the " God of peace ſhall bruiſe Satan under " your feet," and put that new ſong into your mouth, " Now is come ſalvation, and " ſtrength, and the kingdom of our God, " and the power of his Chriſt; for the ac- " cuſer of the brethren is caſt down, who " accuſed them before our God, day and " night."

Ye are *returned* to Him,—who will hence-

forth

forth watch over you with peculiar care, and guard you as his property which he purchaſed with his blood. " This *ſhepherd* " of Iſrael, this *biſhop*, this *overſeer* of ſouls, " never ſlumbers nor ſleeps."—Many ſeaſonable, though unknown deliverances, did he work for you, even while you ungratefully deſpiſed and rejected him. Often did he pluck you out of the jaws of the bear and the lion, before you were acquainted with him, or had any thought of craving his protection: but now his eye is continually upon you, his ear is at all times open to your cry, his everlaſting arms are around and underneath you; and therefore you may boldly ſay,—" The Lord is my light, " and my ſalvation, whom ſhall I fear? The " Lord is the ſtrength of my life, of whom " ſhall I be afraid? Behold, God is my ſal- " vation; I will truſt, and not be afraid: " for the Lord JEHOVAH is my ſtrength " and my ſong; he alſo is become my ſal- " vation."

Ye are *returned* to Him,—who hath not only almighty power to guard you againſt danger, but infinite compaſſion likewiſe to

ſympathiſe

ſympathiſe with you in all your diſtreſſes, and to comfort you in all your ſorrows.— He is meek and merciful, patient and condeſcending: "He gathers the lambs with "his arms, and carries them in his boſom, "and gently leads thoſe that are with "young." He pities their infirmities, and pardons their errors; he ſpares them when they are weary, and attends them when they are ſick: nay, what no other ſhepherd can do, he imparts ſtrength to the faint, and health to the diſeaſed; and not only beſtows food, but gives them an appetite to feed upon it: he alſo bleſſeth their proviſion, and cauſeth it to nouriſh them.

What ſhall I ſay more? This *ſhepherd and biſhop of ſouls* continues to be their guardian even until death: neither doth he leave them at that awful period, but enters with them into the deep and darkſome vale, ſupports them with "his ſtaff," and ſo "comforts them with the rod of his ſtrength," that they "walk through it with dignity, "and fear no evil, becauſe he is with them." Many of the ſaints have been remarkably honoured in this reſpect; even ſome, "who

"through

" through fear of death were all their life " long ſubject to bondage," have, in their lateſt moments, been enabled to triumph over this king of terrors, and to ſay with the Apoſtle Paul, " O death, where is thy " ſting? O grave, where is thy victory? " The ſting of death is ſin; and the ſtrength " of ſin is the law. But thanks be unto " God, who giveth us the victory, through " Jeſus Chriſt our Lord." Or if to any of them theſe evening-ſhadows are ſo thick, that they cannot ſee the hand that ſupports them; yet this momentary gloom ſhall only ſerve to heighten their ſurpriſe, their gratitude, and their joy, when at the farther end of the valley this good ſhepherd ſhall diſpel the cloud, and ſtand before them revealed in all his glory;—when he ſhall embrace them in his arms, and carry them upward to thoſe greener paſtures, and more fruitful fields of the heavenly Canaan; where, as it is beautifully expreſſed in the book of the *Revelations*, (chap. vii. at the cloſe), " they ſhall hunger no more, neither " thirſt any more, neither ſhall the ſun light " on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb

" which

" which is in the midſt of the throne, ſhall " feed them, and ſhall lead them unto living " fountains of water: and God ſhall wipe " away all tears from their eyes."

But I muſt not ſtay to enlarge upon theſe particulars; the imperfect account you have already heard, of the paſt and preſent ſtate of believers in Chriſt,—what they *were* by nature, and what they *are* by grace,—may ſuffice to direct us to that frame and temper of heart, with which we ought to approach the table of the Lord.——And it is obvious, in the

1ſt place, That we ſhould do it with the deepeſt humility.——This is the garb that ſits moſt gracefully, and ſuits us beſt, whether we conſider ourſelves as lapſed, or reſtored; as ſinners, or as ſaints.——Are we pardoned? once we were condemned.—— Are we ſanctified? once we were impure. ——Are we found? once we were loſt.—— Are we made alive? lately we were dead; and ſtill we live by an act of grace; it was God who quickened us, and not we ourſelves: he only maketh us to differ; neither have we any thing but what we received

ceived from him. Surely, then, pride was not made for man.

2dly, We ſhould perform this ſervice with the warmeſt emotions of gratitude and love: —giving thanks to the Father, who ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him to be a ſacrifice and ſin-offering for us: giving thanks to the Son, who ſpared not himſelf, but having taken upon him the form of a ſervant, ſubmitted to hunger and thirſt, to watching and wearineſs, to ignominy and torture; nay, to death and the grave; that through the merit of his death we might live for ever:—giving thanks to the Spirit of all grace, who unites us to Chriſt, and applies to our ſouls that redemption he hath purchaſed, who renews our depraved natures, and renders us meet for the inheritance of the ſaints in light. How well doth that hymn of praiſe become the remembrance of Chriſt's death, with which the heavenly hoſts celebrated the tidings of his birth? "Glory to God in the higheſt, on earth "peace, good-will towards men."

3dly, Godly ſorrow for paſt offences, and holy purpoſes to offend no more, ſhould likewiſe

likewiſe attend us to the table of the Lord. Is Chriſt there ſet forth as crucified before our eyes! and can we "look upon him "whom we have pierced," without mourning for thoſe ſins which were the cauſe of his ſufferings? or can we mourn for them, without hating them, and reſolving to forſake them?——Should not this be the language of every ſincere communicant? "What "have I to do any more with idols?"—— "What I know not, Lord, teach thou me; "if I have done iniquity, I will do ſo no "more." But then, in the

4th place, Theſe purpoſes muſt ever be accompanied with a ſenſe of our own weakneſs, and of our abſolute need of aid from above. Even after we are *returned* to the *biſhop of our ſouls*, if left to ourſelves we ſhould quickly ſtumble and fall; the ſame hand that brought us back, when we were as *ſheep going aſtray*, will always be neceſſary to uphold us in our journey, and to lead us forward till we arrive at the promiſed land. "Without me," ſaid our Lord, even to thoſe who were united to him, as the branches are to the vine, "without me," or ſe-

parated

parated from me, " ye can do nothing: as " the branch cannot bear fruit of itſelf, ex- " cept it abide in the vine; no more can " ye, except ye abide in me." What is undertaken in ſelf-confidence, ſhall certainly iſſue in ſhame and diſappointment. The Apoſtle Peter, who boaſted, that " though " all ſhould forſake his Maſter, yet would " not he," not only forſook him, but with oaths and imprecations denied that he knew him. " He that truſteth to his own heart " is a fool:" —— " Behold," ſaid the Prophet Habakkuk, " his ſoul which is lifted " up, is not upright in him." Needful, then, moſt needful, is that caution, ". Let " him who thinketh he ſtandeth, take heed " leſt he fall." At the ſame time, in the

5th place, This diffidence of ourſelves ought always to be qualified with a ſtedfaſt truſt, an unſuſpecting confidence, in the power and faithfulneſs of our great Redeemer. Paul, who diſclaimed the ability of conceiving ſo much as one good thought, independent of God, did not however heſitate to ſay, " I can do all things through " Chriſt that ſtrengtheneth me." The ſame

good

good ſhepherd who found us when we were loſt, is able to "lead us in the paths of "righteouſneſs;" and he will do it, "for "his name's ſake." He upon whom our help is laid, is ſtyled "the faithful and the "true witneſs:" And theſe are his kind encouraging words to all who are *returned* to him as the *biſhop of their ſouls*: "My grace "is ſufficient for thee:"—"Fear not, for I "am with thee; be not diſmayed, for I "am thy God; I will ſtrengthen thee; yea, "I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee "with the right hand of my righteouſ-"neſs."

Such, my brethren, is that temper of heart with which we ought to attend upon this great Chriſtian ſolemnity: The deepeſt humility, and the warmeſt gratitude; godly ſorrow on account of our wanderings in time paſt, and holy purpoſes to walk circumſpectly for the time to come; a ſenſe of our weakneſs, and of our abſolute need of grace from on high, joined with a firm unſuſpecting reliance on the power and faithfulneſs of our glorious Redeemer, who hath promiſed the Spirit to them that aſk

it, and bids us "aſk, and receive, that our "joy may be full."——Thus let us encompaſs the altar of God, praying that this goſpel-feaſt may prove effectual, through his bleſſing, for confirming our faith, for inflaming our love, and enlivening our hope; —that, by the nouriſhment it affords, we may be ſtrengthened to purſue our journey through this wilderneſs, till, having paſſed the dark valley and ſhadow of death, we ſhall enter into the promiſed land of reſt, where, face to face, we ſhall behold the *ſhepherd and biſhop of our ſouls*, and, ſurrounding the throne of God and of the Lamb, bear our part in that grateful triumphant ſong, "Unto him that loved us, and waſhed us "from our ſins in his own blood, and hath "made us kings and prieſts unto God, and "his Father; to him be glory and domi-"nion for ever and ever." *Amen.*

SER-

SERMON X.

HEBREWS iv. 16.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

THE great atonement we are this day to commemorate, is the ſole foundation of that *throne of grace* to which the Apoſtle invites us in my text; for it is only "in Chriſt Jeſus, that God reconcileth "the world unto himſelf." So that the ſubject I have choſen hath an obvious and peculiar reference to that ſacred ſervice in which we are ſhortly to be engaged.——In order to render it profitable for our inſtruction and comfort, I propoſe, in dependence upon divine aid,

Firſt, To explain what is meant by *coming boldly unto the throne of grace*; and,

Secondly, To conſider the errand upon which we are invited to come; namely, *that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to*

help in time of need. After which, I ſhall, in the

Third place, Illuſtrate the motives, or grounds of encouragement, ſuggeſted by the Apoſtle in the foregoing context, upon which the exhortation appears to be founded:

And then direct you to the practical improvement of the whole.

I begin with explaining what is meant by *coming boldly unto the throne of grace.*

You will eaſily perceive, that the *boldneſs* here recommended, muſt be ſomething entirely different from fearleſs preſumption, or headlong irreverence, in our approaches to God; for he hath expreſsly ſaid, and confirmed the truth of it by many awful examples, "I will be ſanctified in them "that come nigh me, and before all the "people I will be glorified."——"God is "greatly to be feared in the aſſembly of "the ſaints; he is to be had in reverence "of all that are about him." We find this ſame Apoſtle, towards the cloſe of the epiſtle, concluding a moſt lofty and anima-

ted

ted deſcription of the dignity and privileges of the goſpel-church, with this remarkable inference, " Wherefore, we receiving a " kingdom which cannot be moved, let us " have grace, whereby we may ſerve God " acceptably, with *reverence and godly fear*; " for our God is a conſuming fire." Nay, the latter part of my text is ſufficient to qualify the expreſſion, and to guard us againſt any miſtake about its true meaning and import. In what character muſt we approach the throne of grace? Is it not as creatures that *need* both *mercy and grace*?— If ſo, then ſurely the *boldneſs* with which we are exhorted to come, can be no other than the *boldneſs* of humble penitents; ſuch as may conſiſt with a conviction of guilt, and a ſenſe of weakneſs; a *boldneſs* that takes its riſe, not from any ſuppoſed goodneſs or worthineſs in ourſelves, but from the higheſt and moſt honourable conceptions of the greatneſs, as well as of the clemency, of that God whom we adore.

It is not then to filial awe and reverence, but to diſtruſt and jealouſy, that *boldneſs* is here oppoſed. The ſpirit becoming the

goſpel-ſtate is not a ſpirit of bondage and fear, but a ſpirit of adoption, diſpoſing and enabling us to " cry, Abba, Father." In this temper we ſhould approach *the throne of grace;* not with terror and amazement, like criminals dragged before a tribunal of juſtice; but with a cheerful hope of obtaining pardon and acceptance, for the ſake of him " who died for our ſins, and " roſe again for our juſtification;"—" who " ſuffered, the juſt for the unjuſt, that he " might bring us to God."

Man's apoſtaſy began with harſh and injurious thoughts of God: ſeduced by the tempter, he ſuſpected his Creator both of falſehood and envy: —— And it is the office of faith to repair that injury, by recogniſing his title to the entire and unreſerved truſt of the creature. It was for this end that " God, being willing more " abundantly to ſhew to the heirs of pro- " miſe, the immutability of his counſel, " confirmed it by an oath; that by two " immutable things, in which it was im- " poſſible for God to lie, they might have " a ſtrong conſolation, who have fled for

" refuge

" refuge to lay hold upon the hope ſet be-
" fore them." It is his pleaſure, that we rely upon him with an unſuſpecting confidence; and we then honour him moſt, when, conſcious of our own unworthineſs, but depending at the ſame time upon his faithful word of promiſe; ſatisfied with the proofs he hath given us of his love, and encouraged by his kind and generous invitation; we come to his throne with a child-like freedom, to pour out our hearts before him, and to preſent our ſupplications for that mercy and grace, which he is always ready to beſtow upon thoſe who feel their need of ſuch important bleſſings. —But the full meaning and import of the exhortation will better appear, when I have opened the errand upon which we are invited to *come boldly unto the throne of grace.*— Which was the

Second thing propoſed in the method. ——The errand, you ſee, conſiſts of two parts.

The *firſt* in order is, *that we may obtain mercy*;—mercy to pardon our ſins, and

to reinſtate us in the favour and friendſhip of God.——This bleſſing is introductory to all others; for till we are reconciled to God through the great Mediator, we are incapable of holding communion with him; neither can we yield unto him any ſervice that is acceptable:—"Two cannot walk together, except they "be agreed;"—and till *the blood of Jeſus, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himſelf without ſpot unto God, purge our conſcience from dead works, we cannot ſerve the living God:* for "they that are in the fleſh, can-"not pleaſe God." Nay, after we are juſtified and accepted in the Beloved, though we are thereby ſecured againſt final condemnation, yet we are not raiſed above the need of pardoning mercy: ſtill we ſhall have this errand *to the throne of grace;* our repeated backſlidings will always render it neceſſary to make repeated application to the blood of the covenant, for cleanſing us afreſh, and obtaining renewed intimations of pardon and acceptance.

But we have another errand beſides this

to

to *the throne of grace*;—namely, *that we may find grace to help in time of need.* The form of expreſſion implies, that there is no danger of a diſappointment: aſſiſting grace is already prepared; it waits our coming; and if we ſeek, we ſhall certainly *find it.*—It farther ſeems to intimate, that we ſhould be habitually in a poſture of waiting upon God, according to that apoſtolic injunction, "Pray without ceaſing;" for ſuch is our weak diſtempered ſtate, that there is no portion of time in the whole duration of our life upon earth, which is not to us *a time of need:* ſhould God withdraw his help for one moment, in that very moment we ſhould ſtumble and fall.

One thing deſerves our particular attention; namely, That the grace we are encouraged to aſk, is grace for *preſent need*, and not preſent grace for *future ſuppoſed neceſſities.* This remark is of greater importance than is generally apprehended. It is no uncommon thing for ſerious people, who ſuſpect their own ſincerity, to forecaſt ſome trial of the ſevereſt kind, and to paſs judgement upon themſelves, according

according to the preſent ſtate and temper of their minds with reſpect to that ſuppoſed trial.——What ſhall I think of myſelf? ſaith one: it is required of a diſciple of Jeſus, that he take up his croſs;—but ſo feeble am I, that my nature ſhrinks at the remoteſt proſpect of ſuffering: ſhould perſecution ariſe for righteouſneſs ſake, I ſhould not be able to ſtand in that evil day; I ſhould ſink under the croſs, and "make ſhipwreck of faith and a good "conſcience."——Alas! ſaith another, inſtead of "deſiring to depart, and to be "with Chriſt," Death is to me the "king "of terrors;"—when I think of diſſolution, my heart dies within me; what ſhall I do when the fatal period is come?——Were I in Chriſt Jeſus, ſurely it could not be thus with me: have I not then cauſe to conclude that my religion is vain?——By ſuch unwarrantable experiments do many perplex and diſcourage their ſouls, and weaken their hands for preſent duty. I call them *unwarrantable experiments*, becauſe they are not only beſide the ſcripture-rule, but directly contrary to it. Our Lord

Lord hath commanded us, " to take no " thought for the morrow, but leave the " morrow to take thought for the things " of itſelf; becauſe ſufficient unto the day " is the evil thereof." When he fore-warned his diſciples, that they were to be brought before governors and kings for his ſake, did he require them to tell, at that very inſtant, what defence they could make? or did he even ſet them upon preparing anſwers to ſuch queſtions as might be put to them? No: on the contrary, he ſaid unto them, " Be not anxious how, or " what ye ſhall ſpeak; for it ſhall be given " you in that ſame hour what ye ſhall " ſpeak." When ye are brought to the trial and work of confeſſors, then ſhall you find the courage and wiſdom of confeſſors. ——So it is, my brethren, with reſpect to us: grace to ſuffer, is for a ſuffering ſeaſon: grace to die, is for dying moments: then, but not before, is the *time of need.* Are you ſolicitous about *grace* for future emergencies? let me aſk you, I pray, have you got all the *grace* you need for preſent duty? —— If you think you have, I can, without

without further inquiry, assure you, that you are mistaken. —— At this very moment you need grace to cure your anxiety and distrust, to check your impatience and presumptuous curiosity. Cast your care upon God for every needful support, when you shall be called to suffer and die, and come to his throne for grace that may enable you to live to some good and useful purpose in the mean time. Seek grace to mortify your remaining corruptions, to strengthen your faith, and to inflame your love: seek grace to perform all the duties of social life, to make you good neighbours, —good friends, —good parents, —or good children,—that you may serve and glorify God in those stations and conditions of life which his providence hath allotted you. These ought to be the immediate objects of your care: for till the present time cease to be a *time of need*, it is indecent, it is foolish, to look beyond it, and to distress yourselves with a premature anxiety about the morrow. —— Our errand, then, to *the throne of grace*, is no other than this, to obtain mercy for the pardon of past sins,

ſins, and grace proportioned to our preſent neceſſity; either to ſubdue our corruptions, to reſiſt temptations, to ſupport us under the afflictions we feel, or to ſtrengthen us for the duties we are called to perform.—I now proceed, in the

Third place, To illuſtrate the grounds of encouragement upon which the Apoſtle's exhortation is founded. Theſe are ſuggeſted in the two preceding verſes: *We have a great High Prieſt, Jeſus the Son of God.*—This High Prieſt *is paſſed into the heavens*; and *he is not an High Prieſt who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without ſin.*

The *1ſt* thing to be conſidered is the perſonal worth and dignity of our High Prieſt. Of this we have a lofty deſcription in the beginning of the epiſtle: there he is ſtyled the *Son of God*, and the *Creator of the worlds*, the *brightneſs of the Father's glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon, who upholdeth all things by the word of his power*; infinitely higher than the *angels*, inaſmuch

as

as he is their *Lord* and head, and they only *miniſtering ſpirits*, whom he employs as his ſervants, and *ſends forth to miniſter unto the heirs of ſalvation*. Thus great is the Chriſtian's High Prieſt: this is that exalted Perſon who hath undertaken to mediate between God and ſinners. Have we not here then one ſolid ground of encouragement, a firm foundation for our hope of the divine favour and acceptance?——— But this ground of encouragement receives a mighty addition, when, together with the perſonal dignity of our High Prieſt, we conſider, in the

2*d* place, The value of what he did and ſuffered in that character. Having aſſumed our nature, "and taken upon him the "form of a ſervant," he yielded a perfect obedience to that law which we had broken, and at laſt ſubmitted to a painful, ignominious, and accurſed death, that we might live through him. "He was made ſin for "us, who knew no ſin, that we might be "made the righteouſneſs of God in him." Hereby the law was magnified, divine juſtice infinitely glorified, and a way opened for

for the free and honourable exercise of mercy and grace, to a guilty world. The sufferings of the Son of God in our nature, and for our sins, afford a display of the divine holiness and justice, more bright and awful than if the whole human race had perished irrecoverably. While the law is not made void, but established, by what he *did*; at the same time, by what he *suffered*, a public testimony is given to all intelligent creatures, that sin is an evil of such deep malignity, that nothing less than a sacrifice of infinite worth could expiate the guilt of it, or save the transgressors from endless misery: So that this dispensation, which provides so effectually for the glory of God, hath a powerful tendency to quiet our minds, and to cherish our hopes of pardon and acceptance; because now it appears, that God may be merciful without impairing the authority of his government; nay, perfectly just, as well as infinitely gracious, when he justifieth those who believe on Jesus.—— These hopes will appear to have a firmer foundation, if, to the dignity of our High Priest,

Prieſt, and the ineſtimable worth of his obedience and ſufferings, we add, in the

3*d* place, That he was fully authoriſed to undertake this office: for, as we read in this ſame epiſtle, "Chriſt glorified not himſelf to be made an High Prieſt; but he who ſaid unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee." Indeed, without ſuch a divine conſtitution, the ſacrifice he offered could have been of no benefit to us: The acceptance of one life in the place of another, dependeth ſolely upon him to whom the forfeiture is made. But bleſſed be God, the deſignation of our Lord to the office of High Prieſt, is ſo plainly and repeatedly aſſerted in Scripture, that there is no room left us to doubt of it. "He gave himſelf for our ſins, according to the will of God." Hence he is ſtyled the *Meſſenger of the covenant*, the *Servant*, and the *elect of God.* In every part of his undertaking he acted by commiſſion from his heavenly Father: "He came not to do his own will, but the will of him that ſent him;" which affords the ſtrongeſt encouragement to draw near to God with filial

filial boldneſs, and to hope for acceptance through this great High Prieſt of his own deſignation and choice, this "mighty One, "upon whom he hath laid our help." Yea,

4*thly*, To remove every poſſible ground of jealouſy, God hath teſtified, in the moſt public and ſolemn manner, his perfect ſatisfaction with his whole conduct as Mediator; which is a circumſtance of the utmoſt importance, to give our hope a firm and laſting foundation. Though Chriſt had died on purpoſe to expiate our guilt, and to reconcile us to God; though his ſacrifice had been of infinite worth in itſelf, and offered in conſequence of his Father's appointment; yet, after all, ſomething would have appeared wanting to aſſure our faith, if we had not been furniſhed with the ſtrongeſt evidence, that this ſacrifice was really accepted. But, thanks be unto God, the certainty of this is put beyond all queſtion in the ſacred Scriptures. Twice was it proclaimed by an audible voice from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom "I am well pleaſed." The miracles wrought

at his death, and that greateſt of miracles, his own reſurrection from the dead, are further confirmations of this comfortable truth. But, above all, his aſcenſion into heaven, and his exaltation to the right hand of the Majeſty on high, remove every conceivable cauſe of fear, and do well ſupport that triumphant challenge of the Apoſtle, "Who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of "God's elect? It is God that juſtifieth: "Who is he that condemneth? It is Chriſt "that died, yea rather, that is riſen again, "who is even at the right hand of God, "who alſo maketh interceſſion for us." Which brings me to the

5th and *laſt* ground of encouragement, namely, That our great High Prieſt, who is paſſed into the heavens, is ever mindful of our intereſt, and lives and reigns for the benefit of his people. We are told in Scripture, that the legal High Prieſt carried the names of the twelve tribes on his ſhoulder and breaſt-plate, when, on the great day of atonement, he made his ſolemn entrance into the Holy of Holies; that while God looked

looked upon him, he might at the ſame time remember the tribes of Iſrael, accept his offering for the expiation of their guilt, and hearken to his prayers and interceſſion on their behalf. In like manner, our great High Prieſt, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who is gone into the heavenly ſanctuary, "appears "in the immediate preſence of God for us," ſuſtaining the character of the ſecond Adam, the head and repreſentative of all his ſpiritual ſeed; and is raiſed to the higheſt dignity and power, that he may manage their affairs to the beſt advantage, and effectually ſecure their eternal ſalvation. He was a ſufferer himſelf, and knoweth the heart of a ſufferer, not by report, but by perſonal experience: he was tried with temptations even as we are; and though he conquered them all, yet he had proof of the ſkill, as well as of the malice of the tempter, and can make allowance for the diſproportion betwixt himſelf and us. Nay, he ſtooped thus low, not only to make atonement for our guilt, and to open for us a paſſage to the mercy-ſeat; but that we, being aſſured of his perfect acquaintance with human in-

firmity, might have the moſt cheerful reliance upon his compaſſion and ſympathy, and *boldly* approach *the throne of grace*, having ſuch a friend to patronize us, and to plead our cauſe: "For we have not an "High Prieſt who cannot be touched with "the feeling of our infirmities; but was in "all points tempted like as we are, yet without ſin."

By ſuch encouraging motives, my brethren, doth the Apoſtle preſs the exhortation in my text: "We have a great High "Prieſt, Jeſus the Son of God,"—who offered up a ſacrifice of infinite worth;—not officiouſly or at random, but by the expreſs appointment of his heavenly Father, and in conſequence of a ſolemn agreement or covenant.——This ſacrifice was accepted for all the purpoſes for which it was intended;—in teſtimony whereof, our great High Prieſt hath "paſſed into the heavens," where, amidſt all the ſplendors of his exalted ſtate, he kindly remembers his people upon earth, feels their infirmities, ſympathiſes with them in all their ſufferings, and never ceaſeth to make interceſſion for them.—Have we not

then

then reaſon *to come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need?*

But, after all, it muſt be confeſſed, that in this, as in moſt other things, the knowledge of our duty is far eaſier than the practice of it.

"Chriſt's fleſh is meat indeed, and his "blood is drink indeed;" but our Lord hath aſſured us, "that except we eat his "fleſh, and drink his blood, we have no "life in us." A ſpeculative knowledge will avail us nothing; a Saviour unapplied can be no Saviour to us. To think juſtly of Chriſt, and of the great things he hath already done, and continues to do, for ſinners of mankind, is an attainment of no great difficulty; but to improve his mediation as the ſource of our joy, and the means of our comfortable acceſs to God, requires greater ſkill than many who profeſs to believe on him are poſſeſſed of. This wiſdom cometh only from above. Nevertheleſs, as God uſually worketh by the miniſtry of the word, before I conclude this diſcourſe, I

ſhall endeavour to ſuggeſt a few hints that may be of uſe to you.

Are you overwhelmed with the glory and majeſty of God? Are you ready to ſay, as Elihu did, "Behold! God is great, and we "know him not?"——Turn your eyes to the "Word made fleſh," and ſee the divine glory veiled in the human nature of your Redeemer. We can have poſitive conceptions of Jeſus Chriſt; and though we may not think that the Godhead is fleſh, yet we may think of it as it appeared in fleſh, and ſhone forth in its holineſs and goodneſs to the world. In the perſon of our Mediator, God approacheth us familiarly, to invite us to come to him with humble confidence, and reverend boldneſs. Chriſt did not aſſume a form of terror; women durſt talk with him, ſinners durſt eat with him, the poor and the diſeaſed durſt aſk his help: And though we muſt not debaſe the *dignity* of the Son of God, by imagining that it is as much obſcured in heaven as it was upon earth; yet even the glorified humanity of *the Word made fleſh*, affords unſpeakable comfort to the ſoul, that might otherwiſe ſhrink

ſhrink back, and tremble to draw near to God.

Doth the guilt of ſin terrify you? Do you fear that a juſt and holy God can never accept ſuch offenders as you have been? Here Chriſt is our relief; who was wounded for our tranſgreſſions, and bruiſed for our iniquities; who paid our debt, and hath purchaſed and ſealed our pardon with his blood. The curſe and condemning ſentence of the law are indeed terrible; but if we have truly fled to Chriſt for refuge, he hath nailed them to his croſs, and will give us a full and free diſcharge.

Are you diſcouraged with the infirmities you daily feel, the imperfection of your knowledge, the wandering of your thoughts, the coldneſs of your love, and the feebleneſs of your deſires?—Faith can ſtill find a remedy in Chriſt Jeſus, by reminding us, that our acceptance with the Father is thro' the merits of his Son:—and he, my friends, is worthy, though we are unworthy; his righteouſneſs is perfect and without ſpot: he is not weak when we are weak; he is not diſtempered when we are ſick: our High

Prieſt is unchangeable, " the ſame yeſterday, " to-day, and for ever."

Are you haraſſed with temptations, thoſe fiery darts of the wicked one? Still faith can find a Saviour ſuited to your neceſſity. Our great Lord ſubmitted, not only to be tempted by Satan, but to be tempted in a wilderneſs, where he had none to comfort him; nay, tempted to the moſt horrid blaſphemy and wickedneſs, even to fall down and worſhip the devil himſelf. Look, therefore, to him " who is touched with the feel- " ing of your infirmities, having been in all " points tempted even as you are." He who made all temptations ſubſervient to the triumphs of his own patience and conquering power, will ſupport and ſuccour his tempted ſervants, and make his grace victorious in the weakeſt hearts.

It ſometimes happens, that the ſoul is oppreſſed with griefs and fears, which it cannot account for. Such was the Pſalmiſt's caſe when he ſaid, " I remembered God, " and was troubled; I complained, and " my ſpirit was overwhelmed: O my God, " my ſoul is caſt down in me; I am ſo " troubled,

" troubled, that I cannot ſpeak." But even in this caſe, faith can look to Chriſt, and remember, that he too was in an agony; an agony more painful than any thing we can feel; and yet, in that agony, he prayed more earneſtly.——Faith will recollect the very words he uttered, *My ſoul is exceeding ſorrowful, even unto death.—Now is my ſoul troubled, and what ſhall I ſay?*—It will remind us how he cried upon the croſs, *My God! My God! why haſt thou forſaken me?* though even then he was ſtill the beloved of the Father; and ſuffered all this, that we might not be finally abandoned and forſaken.

After this manner may we improve the mediation of Chriſt for bringing us, in all the variety of our circumſtances, with humble *boldneſs to the throne of grace*; where, to our preſent comfort, and our everlaſting joy, *we ſhall obtain mercy, and find grace to help* us *in* every ſeaſon *of need.* Amen.

SER-

SERMON XI.

ROMANS viii. 32.

He that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all things?

SO bright and luminous are the principles of heavenly wiſdom, that, like the ſun, they are ſeen by their own light, and may rather be ſaid to impart themſelves to us, than to be diſcovered by us. With regard to eternal things, the learned have no advantages above the unlearned: neither the gifts of nature, nor the improvements of art, confer any precedency in the ſchool of Chriſt. The comfort of a Chriſtian doth not depend upon a proceſs of abſtract reaſoning; but reſults immediately from the knowledge and belief of intereſting facts, atteſted by God, and faithfully recorded in the ſcriptures of

of truth: for as it is the will of God, that all the "heirs of promiſe" ſhould have "a "ſtrong conſolation," therefore the grounds of their conſolation are brought to the level of the weakeſt capacity, that all his children may have equal acceſs to them, and feed like brethren at one common table. Accordingly, you may obſerve, that, in the paſſage I have now read to you, the Apoſtle only reminds us of what God hath already done for ſinners of mankind; *He ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all:* And inſtead of reaſoning in form, as if the import of this fact were dark or ambiguous, he takes it for granted, that the moſt ſimple and illiterate will perceive it at once; and gives a defiance to ignorance, nay to diſtruſt itſelf, either to pervert its meaning, or to draw from it any other concluſion, than what he himſelf doth; *How ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all things?*—— My preſent deſign is, in dependence upon divine aid,

Firſt, To illuſtrate this great foundation of the Chriſtian's hope, *God ſpared not his own*

own Son, but delivered him up for us all; and then to ſhow, in the

Second place, That the gift which God hath already beſtowed upon ſinners of mankind, affords every ſincere believer the moſt abſolute certainty, that nothing ſhall be with-held from him that is neceſſary to make him happy.

I begin with the great foundation of the Chriſtian's hope, which is both the ſubject of my text, and the object preſented to us in the holy ſacrament of the ſupper: *God ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.*

Amazing words! — The *God* in whom we live and move,—the Father of our ſpirits, [and the former of our bodies;—who poſſeſſed an eternity of happineſs and glory before we began to exiſt, and can neither be enriched by our ſervices, nor impoveriſhed by the want of them:—*He* whoſe goodneſs we had abuſed by the vileſt ingratitude; whoſe omnipotence we had defied by the moſt inſolent rebellion;—even *that God* who "ſpared not the angels that ſinned, "but

" but hath reſerved them in everlaſting " chains, under darkneſs, to the judgement of " the great day,"—vouchſafed to pity and to *ſpare* the children of men:—Nay, to make way for the exerciſe of this diſtinguiſhing mercy, *he ſpared not his own Son*, the Lord of angels, the Creator of the worlds; but, having ſubſtituted him in our place, clothed him with our nature, and " laid upon him " the iniquities of us all," he *delivered him up* to contempt and perſecution, to agony and torture, to death and the grave:—and all this for our benefit, to redeem us from everlaſting miſery, and to reinſtate us in that happineſs and glory we had forfeited. Theſe are the marvellous doings of the Lord, which the Apoſtle here celebrates with gratitude and wonder, as the grounds of our faith, and hope, and joy.

But that our thoughts may not wander in too wide a field, let us at preſent confine them to the following particulars: *Firſt*, The dignity of the ſufferer; *ſecondly*, The ſufferings he endured; and, *thirdly*, The perſons for whom, and the ends for which, he was *delivered* to theſe ſufferings. In each

of

of theſe we ſhall diſcover a convincing proof of the love of God, a certain pledge of every neceſſary bleſſing.

Firſt, Let us conſider the dignity of the ſufferer. God, ſaith the Apoſtle, *ſpared not his Son*;—his *own*,—his proper Son;—" the " brightneſs of his glory, and the expreſs " image of his perſon;" not a ſon by creation, adoption, or grace, but his " *begotten* " Son," of the ſame eſſence with himſelf, and equal to him in power and in glory. Angels are called *the ſons of God;* " but unto " which of the angels ſaid he at any time, " Thou art my Son, this day have I *begotten* " *thee?*" Nay, Chriſt is ſtyled the " *only* be- " gotten Son" of God; a title of peculiar ſignificancy, importing, that he is not only infinitely great in himſelf, but likewiſe infinitely dear to the Father. Yet this is the perſon whom God ſent to ſave us: and ſurely, if the love of the giver is to be meaſured by the worth and value of the gift, we may juſtly ſay of God's love to us, that " it paſ- " ſeth knowledge." How loth was Jacob, a fond and indulgent parent to all his children, how loth was he to ſend Benjamin down

down to Egypt, even when his own life, and the preſervation of his whole family, ſeemed to depend upon it? yet Benjamin was not his *only* ſon; Jacob had many other children beſides: but, behold! the great, the independent JEHOVAH, who would not ſuffer Abraham to offer up his Iſaac, but provided and accepted a ram in his place, gives his *own*, his *only Son*, to be a ſacrifice for us.——Here the object is ſo high, that contemplation cannot reach it; ſo bright and dazzling, that it overpowers the ſight:—we can only ſay, with David, "This is not "the manner of men, O Lord God;" and muſt with reverence adore, what we ſhall never be able fully to comprehend.

Secondly, From the dignity of the ſufferer, let us proceed to conſider the ſufferings he endured.——Two words are employed by the Apoſtle to convey to our minds a ſuitable apprehenſion both of their greatneſs and variety. God *ſpared him not*, but *delivered him up*.——He *ſpared him not;* that is, he neither excuſed him from ſuffering, nor ſpared him while he ſuffered; he not only put the bitter cup into his hand, but kept it there till he

he had drunk up the dregs of it. With what awful ſeverity did he ſtir up his juſtice! "Awake, O ſword, againſt my ſhepherd, "and againſt the man that is my fellow." ——"It *pleaſed* the Lord to bruiſe him," ſaith the evangelical Prophet, "and to put "him to grief." He would not abate one tear, one groan, one drop of blood, any circumſtance either of ignominy or pain, that was neceſſary to demonſtrate the evil of ſin, and to expiate that guilt which Chriſt, as our Surety, had appropriated to himſelf. ——Thus God *ſpared not his own Son*; nay, inſtead of ſparing him, the Apoſtle adds,

He *delivered him up*. But he doth not ſay to whom, or to what; becauſe Chriſt was *delivered* into ſo many hands, abandoned or given up to ſuch a variety of ſufferings, that a minute detail of them would have obliged him to recite the whole hiſtory of his life; for in every period of it, "he was "*oppreſſed and afflicted*;" from his birth to his death, "he was a man of ſorrows, and ac- "quainted with griefs."—He was *delivered* firſt into the virgin's womb; for even then, O Chriſtians! did his paſſion begin; there

was

was that temple framed, which afterwards, by wicked hands, was pulled down on mount Calvary; there that body was prepared, which was ſcourged, and bruiſed, and nailed to an ignominious and accurſed tree. —— And being thus made fleſh, and brought forth into the world, what was his after life but a repeated *delivery* of him to poverty, to reproach, to temptation, to perſecution:—Such was the pomp, theſe were the harbingers which introduced him to the croſs, and accompanied him to the grave. —— "Deliver me not," ſaid David, "into the hands of mine enemies;" and his prayer was heard: But what David obtained, was with-held from David's Son and Lord; for Chriſt was *delivered* into the hands of his enemies: He was *delivered* to Judas, who betrayed him; to the chief prieſts and rulers, who inſulted and reviled him; to Herod and his men of war, who ſet him at nought; to Pilate, who condemned him; to the Roman ſoldiers, who crucified him:—Nay, more, he was *delivered* to ſuch a ſenſe of divine wrath, that wrath which was due to the ſins of men, as, in the pro-

phetic language of David, "withered his "heart like graſs, and burnt up his bones "like a hearth."———Sin is the ſting of death, but the wrath of God is the ſting of ſin: when that ſeizes upon an awakened conſcience, Oh! what a dark and diſconſolate night doth it draw over the ſinner's mind! or, rather, what a hell doth it kindle in his boſom! Yet it doth not, it cannot, appear in its full horror to us; as we ſee not all the malignity of ſin, ſo neither can we ſee all the wrath that is due to it: but Chriſt had a full view of both in their utmoſt extent; and though he could not deſpair, for that indeed was impoſſible, yet the agony he felt was greater by far than any deſpairing ſinner is capable of feeling, who bears only his own burden; whereas he lay preſſed under the guilt of a whole world. — It were impious to ſay, that the holy martyrs were more patient than their Lord; — yet which of all that noble army ever uttered ſuch diſconſolate language as he did? Their torture was their triumph, their ſufferings a recreation: — Whereas the Son of God cries out in agony, "Now is "my

" my ſoul troubled, and what ſhall I ſay?" —" My God! my God! why haſt thou " forſaken me?"——Whence theſe ſad and mournful complaints?—Did they proceed from any defect of magnanimity and fortitude?—No, my brethren; it was the perfection of his mind that ſeemingly enfeebled him:——the boundleſs extent of his underſtanding, which comprehended the full dimenſions of ſin and of wrath, was the ſole cauſe of his deep and unparalleled diſtreſs. It was not the ſhame nor the torment of the croſs that afflicted him; the thieves who ſuffered with him endured the ſame;—but his ſoul, if I may be allowed the expreſſion, was *crucified* more than his body; his heart had ſharper nails to pierce it than his hands or his feet:—in his body he felt the rage and cruelty of his murderers; but in his ſoul he felt ſufferings of a more exquiſite nature.——Then he bore the griefs, and carried the ſorrows, of all his people; then he felt not the ſins only, but the wounds alſo, of every broken heart; the torments of his martyrs, the reproaches of his ſaints, the poverty, diſtreſſes, and perſecutions,

which any, which all of them, have felt or shall feel, till the last trumpet shall sound, and he shall come again in his glory.—— Thus *God spared not his own Son:* to these inconceivable sufferings was the Lord of life *delivered.*——But for whom, and for what ends, did the Son of God suffer? This was the

Third thing I proposed to consider. And after what hath been already suggested, it is unnecessary that I should spend much time upon this head. It is evident that Christ did not suffer on his own account: "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and se- "parated from sinners."——"He did no "sin, neither was guile found in his lips." ——He suffered in the room of guilty man; he was delivered *for us*, saith the Apostle, not only for our benefit, but in our place: —"He was made sin for us, who knew no "sin, that we might be made the righte- "ousness of God in him."—"He suffer- "ed, the just for the unjust, that he might "bring us to God."—Do you ask, Why *God spared not his own Son?* The answer is, —That he might spare us: he delivered him up

up to temporal ſufferings, that we might be delivered from everlaſting puniſhment: "For God ſo loved the world, that he gave "his only begotten Son, that whoſoever "believeth in him, might not periſh, but "have everlaſting life."——Do you aſk again, Who may lay claim to the benefit of this gift? I readily anſwer, Every child of Adam without exception, who feels his need of a Saviour, and is willing to accept him as he is offered in the goſpel. The death, as well as the birth of Chriſt, "is good ti-"dings of great joy *unto all people*;" to Gentiles as well as to Jews; to men of all kindreds, nations, and languages; to ſinners of all ſorts, the vileſt not excepted; "He is the Lamb of God, which taketh "away the ſin of the *world*."——Every labouring and heavy-laden ſinner is invited to come unto him; and "him that cometh "he will in no wiſe caſt out."——In this ſenſe, Chriſt is the "Saviour of all men;" though I apprehend, that as the Apoſtle, in this paſſage, is writing purpoſely for the comfort of real Chriſtians, this aſſertion, *that Chriſt was delivered up for us all*, is

chiefly intended to ſignify, that all true believers have an equal intereſt in this gift of God; the weakeſt, as well as the ſtrongeſt; the dejected, as well as the joyful; the convert of yeſterday, as well as the oldeſt ſervant in his family: for the inference he draws from it is expreſsly limited to thoſe who have received Chriſt: *How ſhall he not WITH HIM, ALSO freely give us all things?*——This leads me to the

Second branch of my ſubject; which is, to ſhow,

That the gift which God hath already beſtowed upon ſinners of mankind, affords every ſincere believer the moſt abſolute certainty, that nothing ſhall be with-held from him that is neceſſary to make him happy.

The Apoſtle, to give weight and emphaſis to his concluſion, puts it into the form of a queſtion, *How ſhall he not give?*—— It is impoſſible that he ſhould not give;—darkneſs and light may ſooner become one, than that God ſhould deny to believers in Chriſt aught that is conducive to their

their real felicity.——He ſpeaks, you ſee, in the language of aſſurance and triumph: and well he might; for if *God ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all*, what can be ſuppoſed to ſtop the current of his bounty?———Is there any benefit too valuable for God to beſtow?——That cannot be: the gift he hath already conferred, is infinitely more precious than all that remains to be given. Other things may be eſtimated, but "the *riches* of "Chriſt are *unſearchable*:"——"In him "dwelleth all the fulneſs of the Godhead "bodily."———Shall the unworthineſs of the creature reſtrain his munificence?—— This objection is fully obviated by the free and gratuitous manner in which God hath beſtowed his "unſpeakable gift;"—— for it is evident, that we muſt have been far more unworthy of a Saviour, than we poſſibly can be of any ſubſequent favour: and ſeeing *God ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all*, unmerited, nay, unſolicited, what bounds can be ſet to the Chriſtian's hope? eſpecially when we conſider,—that Chriſt was *delivered up* to ſuf-

ferings and death, for this very end, that he might remove thoſe obſtructions that lay in the road of mercy, and render the exerciſe of it conſiſtent with the honour of the divine government.———The ſacrifice of IMMANUEL, afforded ſuch a demonſtration of the unchangeable holineſs and juſtice of God, that without ſtaining the glory of theſe perfections, he may now diſpenſe to penitent believers, all thoſe bleſſings their circumſtances can require: for what the Apoſtle ſays of the pardon of ſin, (*Rom.* iii. 25, 26.), may lawfully be extended to every other benefit: "God hath "ſet forth his Son to be a propitiation, "through faith in his blood, to declare his "righteouſneſs for the remiſſion of ſins; "—that he might be *juſt*, and the juſti-"fier of him who believeth in Jeſus."——Nay, my brethren, it is not only conſiſtent with the juſtice of God, to do good to thoſe who believe in Jeſus; but, I ſpeak it with reverence, it would be inconſiſtent with his juſtice to with-hold good from them; for Chriſt hath actually purchaſed every bleſſing they need. He was *delivered*

up

up " by the determinate counſel and fore-" knowledge of God;" not caſually, or unadviſedly, but in conſequence of a previous agreement or covenant; in which he freely conſented, on his part, " to make his ſoul " an offering for ſin;" and the Father promiſed, that " he ſhould ſee his ſeed;" that he ſhould " prolong his days;" that " the " pleaſure of the Lord ſhould proſper in his " hand;" and that he ſhould " ſee the tra-" vail of his ſoul, and be ſatisfied." Of which ſolemn tranſaction we have an authentic copy recorded by the Prophet *Iſaiah*, chap. liii. 10, 11.

What ſhall we then ſay to theſe things? —Hath God already beſtowed the greateſt of all gifts, the *unſpeakable gift* of his own dear Son?—Did he beſtow it freely, when there was nothing in the creature to merit or invite his love, but, on the contrary, every thing to provoke his holy indignation?—Was this gift deſigned to pave the way for other bleſſings?—Nay, further, were all other bleſſings actually purchaſed by the infinite ſacrifice of this divine Saviour?—How firm then is the foundation

of

of the Chriſtian's hope?—With what humble, yet triumphant confidence, may the believer adopt the words of my text; and put the queſtion, againſt all doubts, all fears, all temptations that may aſſail him, *He that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all things?*

But we have not yet examined the grant itſelf. Shall I ſay the contents of it are large? The expreſſion is too feeble;—my brethren, they are boundleſs, they are infinite: theſe two words *all things*, comprehend both heaven and earth in their boſom; and thus they are explained by this ſame Apoſtle, 1 *Cor.* iii. 21. "All things "are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or "Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or "things preſent, or things to come; all are "yours; and ye are Chriſt's; and Chriſt is "God's."—And is "the world" too a part of the Chriſtian's portion? Yes, my friends. But then it is "the world" conquered by faith, and "crucified to us by the croſs" of our Redeemer. "The luſt of the eye, the "luſt of the fleſh, and the pride of life,"

are

are no parts of that world whereof the Apoſtle there ſpeaks, except it be in this ſenſe, that they are ſubdued and mortified. Chriſt did not ſubmit to hunger and thirſt, that we might riot in luxury; he did not become poor, that we might poſſeſs great eſtates; he did not ſtoop to ignominy and to death, that we might be dignified with worldly honours. Theſe are not included among the *all things* in my text.—The truth is, they hardly deſerve the name of *things*; —they are mere ciphers, the creatures of opinion and fancy, which have no ſignificancy, no price, but what miſtake and deluſion have wantonly ſet upon them.—— Our inheritance then is not diminiſhed when all theſe are left out; nor hath the Chriſtian any inducement to vitiate his charter, by interlining it with thoſe carnal additions which a vain imagination is too apt to ſuggeſt. With Chriſt he hath *all things* which are ſubſervient to the purpoſes for which Chriſt was *delivered:* pardon to remove his guilt; grace to aid him in the performance of duty; comfort to ſupport him under the preſſure of affliction;

every

every needful ſupply during his journey through this world, and immortal life and happineſs in the next.—Hath not the Chriſtian then "a goodly heritage," who hath God and the creature, grace and glory, time and eternity; who is ſafe among enemies as well as among friends; who lives in communion with God on earth, and ſhall dwell with him in heaven for evermore? Say, O Chriſtians, hath ſuch a man reaſon to complain of his portion?

But let it be obſerved, that all theſe things are given *with* Chriſt: his perſon and his benefits can never be divided. This is the order which God hath eſtabliſhed:—He firſt gives us his own Son; and when that *unſpeakable gift* is thankfully received, then, together *with his Son*, he *freely gives us all* other *things*.——But without him, we have no right to any thing we poſſeſs; the food we eat, the raiment we put on, are not ours; we are uſurpers, we are robbers; and as ſuch, ſhall be ſeverely reckoned with at laſt.—This ſhall be the condemnation of unbelievers at the great day, that they fraudulently

dulently ſeized upon their Maſter's goods, and rejected the Saviour, through whom alone they could have obtained a righteous title to them: and their condemnation ſhall be the heavier upon this account, that the Saviour was in their offer, and with him a full right to every benefit they enjoyed.—Think of this, ye who forget God, and have hitherto turned a deaf ear to the calls of his grace.——And,

Let thoſe who have complied with the goſpel-invitation, and thankfully accepted the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, take comfort from what hath been ſpoken upon this ſubject, and approach the table of the Lord with enlarged expectations of obtaining all that is neceſſary to render them truly happy.——God perfectly knoweth what we ſtand moſt in need of: he knoweth whether health or ſickneſs, riches or poverty; whether cordials to cheriſh, or medicines of a different operation, are beſt for us. With reſpect to theſe, it is our duty and our intereſt to ſubject our choice entirely to his pleaſure. This ſhould be our chief, our only care, to renew from the

the heart our thankful acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ: and then we may be assured that nothing can come amiss to us: For *he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, shall* certainly *with him also freely give us all things.* Amen.

SER-

SERMON XII.

ROMANS viii. 31.

What ſhall we then ſay to theſe things? If God be for us, who can be againſt us?

THIS chapter contains a large and animated detail of the privileges that belong to believers in Chriſt Jeſus; and lays open thoſe ſprings of true conſolation, with which the goſpel-covenant is plentifully ſtored. Nothing is wanting that our preſent condition renders neceſſary or deſirable; a ſuitable and an effectual remedy is provided both for our guilt and pollution. No ſin can exceed the merit of a Redeemer's blood; no luſt can withſtand the power of his victorious grace; ſo that we may juſtly adopt the words of the returning prodigal, and ſay, as he did, that "in our "Father's houſe there is bread enough, and "to ſpare."

In the two preceding verſes, the Apoſtle leads us upward to the ſource and fountain

tain of all thoſe bleſſings we preſently poſſeſs, or hope to enjoy; namely, the eternal love of an unchangeable God. It was his ſelf-moving goodneſs that prompted him to deviſe the method of our recovery: and the ſcheme is ſo wiſely laid, ſo complete and finiſhed in all its parts, that no power or policy can defeat the execution of it: "For whom God did foreknow, he "alſo did predeſtinate to be conformed to "the image of his Son, that he might be "the firſt-born among many brethren. "Moreover, whom he did predeſtinate, "them he alſo *called*: and whom he *call*-"*ed*, them he alſo juſtified: and whom "he juſtified, them he alſo glorified."—— So that the man whom God hath "*called* "by his grace," is juſt as ſafe as Omnipotence can make him. Looking backward to God's purpoſe before time commenced, and forward to the glory that awaits him when time ſhall be no more, he may boldly bid defiance to every adverſe power, ſaying, in the triumphant language of this Apoſtle, "Who ſhall lay any thing "to the charge of God's elect?" and,

"Who

" Who ſhall ſeparate us from the love of " God ?"

The words I am to diſcourſe upon, preſent the inſpired author to our view in a very ſtriking and agreeable light. Tranſported and overpowered with the greatneſs of the ſubject, he makes a ſudden and ſolemn pauſe; and then aſks the queſtion, —*What ſhall we ſay to theſe things?*—Nothing can be ſaid *againſt* them: and it is impoſſible to exceed in their juſt commendation. *What then ſhall we ſay* to *them?* What uſe ſhall we make of theſe comfortable truths? or what concluſion ſhall we draw from them?——This I take to be the true meaning of the queſtion. And an important queſtion it is: Bleſſed be God, who put it into the heart of his ſervant both to propoſe and anſwer it. —— Well, then, *what doth* a St Paul *ſay to theſe things?* or rather, what anſwer doth the Spirit of God indite?—Let every believer in Chriſt liſten with joy, and apply it to himſelf: *If God be for us, who can be againſt us?*

As the Apoſtle, through the whole of

this chapter, ſpeaks in the character of an aſſured Chriſtian, the word *if* cannot be ſuppoſed to imply any doubtfulneſs or uncertainty about the truth of the propoſition to which it relates; but rather taketh it for granted, and is of the ſame import, as though the Apoſtle had expreſſed himſelf thus: *Seeing that God is for us:* And therefore, inſtead of proving what none will deny, namely, that this privilege doth really belong to ſanctified believers, I ſhall rather, in the *firſt* place, briefly unfold its meaning and worth;—and then ſhow, in the *ſecond* place, what a ſolid foundation it lays for the joyful concluſion, or rather the triumphant challenge, in the cloſe of the verſe, *Who can be againſt us?*

I begin with unfolding the privilege itſelf, *God is for us.* And it neceſſarily implies, that

God is our friend. This is the very loweſt ſenſe the words will bear; and yet, my brethren, who can conceive the importance and worth of this ſingle bleſſing?——To be in a ſtate of favour

vour with the greateſt and the beſt of Beings, the Father of our ſpirits too, upon whom we conſtantly depend for life, and all things; how delightful the thought! How diſmal to ſuppoſe ourſelves in the oppoſite condition!——As I ſpeak at preſent to real Chriſtians only, I need not enlarge upon this branch of your happineſs. Many of you, doubtleſs, can remember the time when, lying under the ſenſe of unpardoned guilt, and the fearful apprehenſions of deſerved wrath, you would have parted with ten thouſand worlds like this, for one ray of God's countenance, for the remoteſt hint of pardon and acceptance.——Such, I know, will require no commendation of the divine friendſhip: You have already learned from experience, the ſureſt and moſt convincing teacher, that no enjoyment is comparable to the aſſurance of God's love; nay, that all other enjoyments are taſteleſs, or rather bitter, without it.

But the expreſſion carries in it a higher meaning than this: It not only imports that God is reconciled to us; but that he

likewiſe taketh our part, and is active for our good.——*God is for us*; that is, he is *on our ſide*, and employs all his perfections for our ſafety and happineſs. He not only graciouſly forgives what hath formerly been done by us againſt himſelf; but, as far as can conſiſt with the perfection and happineſs of his nature, he feels and reſents what by others is at any time done againſt us. "He that toucheth you," ſaith he, "toucheth the apple of mine "eye." And what ſhall we think of this? —Balaam could ſay, "Surely there is no "enchantment againſt Jacob, neither is "there any divination againſt Iſrael;" for "the Lord his God is with him, and "the ſhout of a king is among them."—— Yet this privilege is common to all believers in Chriſt: the Lord of hoſts is their guardian as well as their friend; he chargeth himſelf with their protection; he adopts them into his family; and not only dignifies them with the title of children, but doth likewiſe enrich them with all the immunities and privileges which that high and endearing appellation imports. And

what

what may they not expect from such a Father? whose wisdom is infinite, whose power is irresistible, whose "mercy is "everlasting," and whose "truth endu- "reth to all generations."——And when I mention the truth of God, this leads me to observe another important sense, in which it may be justly said, that *God is for us*; namely,

That he is our God in covenant, and hath pledged his veracity and faithfulness for every blessing our circumstances can require.———It is comfortable to know that God is not only reconciled to us, but that he likewise taketh our part, and is active for our good.——Nevertheless, as that jealousy, which is inseparable from a consciousness of guilt, might still suggest to us, that some unforeseen cause may throw us out of his protection; therefore "God being willing more abundantly to "shew unto the heirs of promise the im- "mutability of his counsel, hath confirm- "ed it by an oath; that by two immu- "table things, in which it was impos- "sible for God to lie, we might have a

" ſtrong conſolation, who have fled for " refuge to lay hold upon the hope ſet " before us." God hath not left us to ſpell out our privileges, or to reaſon ourſelves into the hope of good things; he hath plainly told us what is in his heart; he hath put his merciful deſigns into the form of a covenant, and expreſſed them in a variety of gracious promiſes; by the help of which we may lay hold upon his truth, and plead the honour of the Godhead for every bleſſing we need. Nay, this covenant is ſealed with the blood of his own Son; upon which account it ſometimes gets the name of a *teſtament*; that is, an irrevocable deed, made ſure and unalterable by the death of the *teſtator*. Hereby the firmeſt foundation is laid for our faith and hope; and that our joy may be full, he hath inſtituted the holy ſacrament of the ſupper, wherein viſible pledges of his love are put into our hands; and by bread and wine, the appointed ſymbols of the broken body and ſhed blood of our Redeemer, Chriſt, and all the benefits

of

of his purchaſe, are repreſented, ſealed, and applied to believers.

Theſe few hints may ſerve to give you ſome view both of the meaning and worth of this important privilege:—*God is for us:*—he is our friend;—he is on our ſide;—he is our God in covenant, and hath given us every kind of ſecurity our hearts could deſire, for whatever is conducive to our real intereſt.—In all, and in each of theſe reſpects, may the Chriſtian ſay, that *God is for him.*——Let us now conſider, in the

Second place, The conſequence of this privilege, or the joyful concluſion which the Apoſtle draws from it:—*Who can be againſt us?*

It is expreſſed, you ſee, in the form of a queſtion or challenge: St Paul, in the name of all true believers, gives a bold defiance to earth and hell, and triumphs in the aſſurance of their ſafety and happineſs.—— The queſtion doth not imply, that they who have God on their ſide, ſhall have no enemies at all; ſuch an immunity would be inconſiſtent with a ſtate of trial, and the

Scriptures give us no warrant to expect any thing of this kind; on the contrary, they aſſure us, that "through much tribulation "we muſt enter into the kingdom of hea- "ven."—"Our adverſary the devil, as a roar- "ing lion, walketh about ſeeking whom "he may devour."—"We wreſtle not only "againſt fleſh and blood; but againſt prin- "cipalities and powers, againſt the rulers "of the darkneſs of this world, and againſt "ſpiritual wickedneſſes in high places."—And as, in the days of Abraham, "he that "was born after the fleſh, perſecuted him "that was born after the ſpirit; even ſo it "is now." Nor ſhall this warfare ceaſe, till that great day of the Lord come, when "all his enemies ſhall be made his foot- "ſtool." But the queſtion, or defiance, may lawfully be conſidered as importing the following particulars.

1*ſt*, That none *ſhall be againſt us* whoſe favour is deſirable.

That the children of God too frequently fall out among themſelves, and ſquabble in the dark, is a melancholy truth; and that theſe contentions are unſeemly and hurtful things,

things, cannot be denied: But a little more day-light would ſoon put an end to the ſcuffle, make them aſhamed of their miſtakes, and unite them in the bonds of an everlaſting friendſhip.—The perſons I ſpeak of, are they who are enemies to believers as ſuch: and of them I ſay, that their favour is not worthy to be coveted, neither doth the want of it deſerve to be regretted. What regard is due to the judgement of thoſe who are ſo blind, that they ſee no beauty in the infinitely perfect God himſelf? eſpecially when their enmity againſt us is only the natural effect of this woful ſtupidity; according to that aſſertion of the Apoſtle John, "Therefore the world knoweth us not, becauſe it "knew him not."——"If the world hate "you," ſaid our Lord, "ye know that it "hated me before it hated you.—If ye were "of the world, the world would love his "own; but becauſe ye are not of the world, "but I have choſen you out of the world, "*therefore* the world hateth you." And ought any wiſe man to be diſquieted on that account?——Nay, my brethren, did we view our enemies in this light, we ſhould look

look upon them as objects of pity, rather than of fear or resentment; and any little hurt they could do to us, would scarcely be felt, whilst we thought of the infinitely greater mischief they were doing to themselves.

2*dly*, *If God be for us*, *who can* prevail *against us?* Who shall be able totally to subdue us, to deprive us of the glory and happiness we look for? Indeed, if the safety of believers depended on their own ability to keep hold of God; if they were left, as it were, to hang upon him by the mere strength of their own arms; a little force or cunning might soon loosen their grasp, and pull them away from him. But herein, my brethren, lies their security, an omnipotent God keepeth fast hold of them; they are committed to that good Shepherd "who "gathers the lambs with his arms, and car-"ries them in his bosom, and gently leads "those that are with young:" They are joined to God by the bond of an "everlast-"ing covenant, ordered in all things and "sure;" and they who would attempt to tear them from him, must first of all make void

void that covenant, reverſe the unchangeable purpoſe of God, and oblige the Almighty to reſign his power.——Such is the deſperate enterpriſe in which the enemies of God's children are engaged: it is not the creature, but the Creator they have to cope with; Jehovah himſelf muſt be overcome, before the weakeſt believer can fall into their hands. Juſtly then might the Apoſtle ſay, as in the cloſe of this chapter, "Who ſhall ſeparate us from the love of "Chriſt? ſhall tribulation, or diſtreſs, or "perſecution, or famine, or nakedneſs, or "peril, or ſword?—Nay, in all theſe things "we are more than conquerors, through "him that loved us. For I am perſuaded, "that neither death nor life, nor angels, "nor principalities, nor powers, nor things "preſent, nor things to come, nor height, "nor depth, nor any other creature, ſhall "be able to ſeparate us from the love of "God which is in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord."——Nay, my text will allow us to advance a ſtep farther, and to ſay, in the

3*d* place, *If God be for us*, who ſhall be able to do us any material hurt in the mean time?

time?——To be assured of final salvation, is indeed an unspeakable blessing; to know that our enemies shall not totally prevail against us, is a desirable privilege: yet a great addition would be made to our comfort, could we also be assured, that their malice and enmity, instead of hurting us, shall contribute as means to promote our true interest.——Well, then, the Apostle, under the direction of God's unerring Spirit, hath asserted this in the strongest and most absolute terms: "We know," saith he at the 28th verse of this chapter; we do not barely hope, but "*we know*, that all things "work together for good, to them that love "God, to them who are the called accord-"ing to his purpose."—Satan endeavours to blow out the spark of grace; but instead of that, he kindles it into a flame, and only blows away the ashes that covered it.—— He plieth the saints with his fiery darts; but instead of killing them, he renders them more expert in the art of defence, teacheth them the use of "the shield of faith," and the other parts of their spiritual armour.— In short, God effectually baffles every at-

tempt

tempt of their enemies: He " beats their " ſwords into plough-ſhares, and their ſpears " into pruning-hooks;" that is, he converts their hoſtile weapons into inſtruments of huſbandry, for the culture and improvement of his people, that in greater abundance they may bring forth " thoſe fruits " of righteouſneſs, which are, through Je- " ſus Chriſt, to his praiſe and glory."

THUS have I opened the joyful import of this queſtion, or challenge, *If God be for us, who can be againſt us?* And in the review of all that hath been ſaid, can we forbear to cry out with the holy Pſalmiſt, " Happy is " the people that is in ſuch a caſe; yea, " happy is that people whoſe God is the " Lord!"——What I further intend is, to give you a few plain and neceſſary directions about the uſe you ought to make of this comfortable ſubject.

But before I proceed to theſe, compaſſion to the ſouls of ſome who may be hearing me, obliges me to ſet before you a very different proſpect, by inverting the queſtion, and putting it in this form:

If

If God be againſt us, who then can be for us?

" The Lord is in his holy temple, the " Lord's throne is in heaven: his eyes be- " hold, his eye-lids try the children of men. " The Lord trieth the righteous: but the " wicked, and him that loveth violence, his " ſoul hateth. Upon the wicked he ſhall " rain ſnares, fire and brimſtone, and an " horrible tempeſt: this ſhall be the portion " of their cup."—" Thine hand ſhall find " out all thine enemies," ſaith the Pſalmiſt, " thy right hand ſhall find out thoſe that " hate thee: thou ſhalt make them as a fiery " oven in the time of thine anger; the " Lord ſhall ſwallow them up in his wrath, " and the fire ſhall devour them." How awful are theſe words, uttered by God himſelf! " I, even I am he, and there is " no God with me: I kill, and I make alive; " I wound, and I heal; neither is there any " that can deliver out of my hand. For I " lift up my hand to heaven, and ſay, I " live for ever. If I whet my glittering " ſword, and mine hand take hold on judge- " ment; I will render vengeance to mine

" enemies,

" enemies, and will reward them that hate " me: I will make mine arrows drunk with " blood."——And " Can you ſtand before " his indignation? Can you abide in the " fierceneſs of his anger, when his fury is " poured out like fire, and the rocks are " thrown down by him?" Conſider this, ye that forget God, leſt he tear you in pieces when there ſhall be none to deliver. Who can make you happy, if God pronounce you miſerable? Who can give quietneſs, if he cauſe trouble? Who can ſcreen you from his juſtice? And, Oh! who can ſupport you under the weight of his vengeance?—— For the Lord's ſake, take a ſerious view of your condition; and then, turn your eyes to that compaſſionate Redeemer, whoſe arms are yet extended to embrace you: Flee ſpeedily to him as your only ſanctuary: Let the earth be acquainted with your bended knees; let the air be acquainted with your fervent ſupplications, till you have reaſon to conclude, that you are vitally united to the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who " of God is made," unto all who believe in him, " wiſdom, and righteouſ-

" neſs,

" neſs, and ſanctification, and redemption."

As for you who are Chriſtians indeed, to whom all the comfort of this text belongs, let me beg your attention to a few neceſſary advices, with which I ſhall conclude this diſcourſe.

1ſt, Beware of deſpiſing your enemies; for that ſhall betray you into ſecurity and careleſſneſs. —— Remember, that however weak they are in compariſon with God, yet in themſelves they are ſtrong and formidable; inſomuch that were God to look on, and leave you to your own defence, you ſhould quickly and eaſily be overmatched. In other armies, the ſtrength of the general conſiſteth in the number and valour of his troops; but in the Chriſtian army, the ſtrength of the whole hoſt, and of every ſoldier in particular, lies in him who is the Lord of hoſts. We ought therefore to maintain an habitual jealouſy of ourſelves: we are never in greater danger than when we are moſt confident that we are out of danger; ſo that the caution which the Apoſtle gave to the Gentile converts, is always in ſeaſon: " Be not high-minded, but fear:"

and

and again, "Let him that thinketh he ſtand-"eth, take heed leſt he fall." At the ſame time, though you muſt not deſpiſe your enemies, yet neither, in the

2*d* place, Ought you to be afraid of them. The true Chriſtian temper lies in the juſt medium betwixt theſe oppoſite extremes: and therefore we are exhorted, not only "to watch," but alſo "to quit ourſelves "like men;" — "to endure hardneſs as "good ſoldiers of Jeſus Chriſt,"—and to be "ſtrong in the Lord, and in the power of "his might." —— "Fear not," ſaith God, "for I am with thee: be not diſmayed, for "I am thy God: I will ſtrengthen thee; "yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold "thee with the right hand of my righte-"ouſneſs." After this encouraging manner doth God ſpeak to his children. Nay, he chides them when they betray the leaſt timorouſneſs in his ſervice; as in Iſaiah, chap. li. 12, 13. "Who art thou, that thou "ſhouldſt be afraid of a man that ſhall "die, and of the ſon of man which ſhall be "made as graſs? and forgetteſt the Lord "thy Maker, that hath ſtretched forth the

" heavens, and laid the foundations of the " earth? and haſt feared continually every " day, becauſe of the fury of the oppreſſor, " as if he were ready to deſtroy? And " where is the fury of the oppreſſor?"——
—Hear how David triumphs in the aſſurance of his ſafety, upon grounds which are common to all believers in Chriſt: " The Lord is my light and my ſalvation, " whom ſhall I fear? The Lord is the " ſtrength of my life, of whom ſhall I be " afraid? Though an hoſt ſhould encamp " againſt me, my heart ſhall not fear: tho' " war ſhould riſe againſt me, in this will I " be confident." Let the wicked tremble, they have reaſon to do ſo; but " let the " heart of every one rejoice that ſeeks the " Lord." Victory is inſured to you; the great " Captain of ſalvation" hath already conquered all your enemies, and ere long he ſhall return, and bring you with ſinging into the heavenly Zion: then ſhall you obtain gladneſs and joy, and ſorrow and mourning ſhall flee away.——But as the ſtrength by which you muſt overcome is

not

not your own, this makes it neceſſary that I direct and exhort you, in the

3d place, To depend upon God, and to walk cloſely with him. For this end, "abide in Chriſt;" for there it is alone that God and ſinners can meet as friends. "God "is *in Chriſt*," ſaith the Apoſtle Paul, "*reconciling* the world unto himſelf:" indeed he is no where elſe in the character of a *reconciler;* and conſequently, if we wiſh to dwell under his ſhadow, it is neceſſary that *we* be *in Chriſt* alſo. This was one of the ſolemn advices which our Lord gave to his diſciples a little before his death: "Abide "in me;"—"as the branch cannot bear "fruit of itſelf except it abide in the vine, "no more can ye, except ye abide in me;" for "without me," or ſeparated from me, "ye can do nothing." In the

4th and *laſt* place, Seeing *God is for us*, let us be *for him:* let us appear openly on his ſide, and act with reſolution and vigour in his ſervice.—God can do his work without us; he ſtands in no need of our aſſiſtance; yet ſuch is his condeſcenſion, that he invites us to the honour of being "workers

" together with himſelf." And what can fire our ambition if this do not!——He is juſt now calling aloud, both by his word and by his providence, " Who will riſe up " for me againſt the evil doers? who will " ſtand up for me againſt the workers of " iniquity?" O! let each of us make haſte to reply with the evangelical prophet, " Here am I, ſend me."——At the ſame time, let us echo back the call, and humbly expoſtulate with him in the words which his own Spirit hath dictated: " Ariſe, O " Lord, and plead thine own cauſe; re- " member how the fooliſh man reproach- " eth thee daily."——" It is time for *thee* " to work, for they have made void thy " law."—Thus doth God permit us to remind him of his own intereſt, while we ourſelves are in a poſture for active ſervice; and ſuch pleadings are highly pleaſing and acceptable.——Let us then, my brethren, in our reſpective ſtations, do what in us lies, to advance the kingdom of Chriſt in the world, and to bear down every thing that ſtands in oppoſition to it. Let the " righteous be bold as lions;" and then

may

may we hope, that "iniquity," as aſhamed, ſhall hide her head, and "ſtop her mouth." At any rate, "our record ſhall be on high," and "our reward with our God." He will receive us unto himſelf, "in that day when "he maketh up his jewels:" and then ſhall an everlaſting diſtinction be made "between "the righteous and the wicked; between "him that ſerveth God, and him that ſer-"veth him not." *Amen.*

SERMON XIII.

LUKE xii. 35, 36, 37.

Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourſelves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Bleſſed are thoſe ſervants, whom the Lord, when he cometh, ſhall find watching: verily I ſay unto you, that he ſhall gird himſelf, and make them to ſit down to meat, and will come forth and ſerve them.

THE obvious deſign of this paſſage is, to excite us to a ſerious preparation for the awful ſolemnities of death and judgement. We are here directed to conſider ourſelves as ſervants, who have a Maſter in heaven; of whoſe return we have the ſtrongeſt aſſurance, but are utterly ignorant of the preciſe time of his coming; and therefore it is both our duty and our intereſt, to be always on our guard, and in a fit poſture to receive

receive him: The happy conſequence of which ſhall be, that our Lord will not only approve of our prudent and zealous concern to pleaſe him, but he will even delight to honour us: he will not deal with us as ſervants, but as friends; and will beſtow upon us a reward infinitely beyond what any ſervices could intitle us to.—So that here we have a ſhort, but comprehenſive, account of the Chriſtian's work and recompence; our duty and encouragement are both ſet before us.

Our duty is repreſented, by the diligent care of ſervants, to have every thing in readineſs for the reception of their abſent maſter. As the Jews, and other eaſtern people, commonly wore long and looſe garments, it was neceſſary, when they had any thing to do which required ſtrength or agility, that they ſhould tuck them up, and gird them cloſe about them: Now, ſays our Saviour, in alluſion to this, *Let your loins be girded about:* that is, lay aſide every thing that may entangle you in your work: *let your lights* be continually *burning*, and ye yourſelves, in every other reſpect, like ſervants, who are

anxious to pleaſe their Lord, and to be found diligent in their proper buſineſs, at whatever hour he ſhall come; that, *when he knocketh*, you may be ready to give him preſent admittance, and not be ſurpriſed in any diſorder.

The reward of the diligent and faithful ſervant is deſcribed in the ſame allegorical manner: *Verily*, ſays he, when their maſter returns, and finds them thus employed, he will beſtow upon them ſome extraordinary marks of honour and regard: He will not conſider them as mere ſervants, "who have "done no more than was their duty;" but will advance them to the rank of friends: he will entertain them in the moſt liberal and gracious manner at his own table; yea, ſo condeſcending is he, that in ſome reſpects he will lay aſide his ſuperiority, as if he ſhould *gird himſelf* like a ſervant, and *come forth* and wait upon them.

I ſhall at preſent confine myſelf to the firſt of theſe ſubjects:—namely, the duty we owe to our abſent Lord.——It is this which more nearly concerns us in the mean time; the glorious reward mentioned in the

the latter part of my text, belongs chiefly to our encouragement; and in that view I ſhall have occaſion to ſpeak of it before I conclude.

Now, by this figurative deſcription of the duty we owe to our abſent Lord, we are plainly taught, in the

1*ſt* place, That we ſhould lay aſide every thing that may encumber us in the ſervice of our Maſter; *Let your loins be girded about.* To the ſame purpoſe the Apoſtle Peter exhorts us, 1 *Peter* i. 13. "Wherefore gird up "the loins of your mind, be ſober, and hope "to the end, for the grace that is to be "brought unto you at the revelation of "Jeſus Chriſt." The New Teſtament abounds with many exhortations of the ſame kind; which will appear to have a peculiar propriety, if we conſider thoſe figurative repreſentations of our work to which they are applied. It is called a *race*, a *ſtrife*, a *warfare:* we muſt run, and wreſtle, and fight; and therefore have need of all our ſtrength and activity. Long garments are for ornament,

nament, but not for uſe: theſe muſt be gathered up, or laid aſide, when a man addreſſes himſelf to any laborious buſineſs. Now ſuch is the nature of our Chriſtian work: "The kingdom of heaven ſuffereth "violence, and the violent take it by force:" We muſt do more than *ſeek* admittance; we muſt "*ſtrive* to enter in at the ſtrait gate; "for many ſhall *ſeek* to enter in, and ſhall "not be able." Think of this, my brethren; ponder the difficulties in your warfare; view the greatneſs of your work; conſider the number and ſtrength of your enemies; look through that large ſyſtem of duties you have to perform; and then you muſt be convinced, that the moſt vigorous exertion of every active power is no more than needful in ſuch circumſtances as ours. We muſt therefore, I ſay, labour to get rid of every incumbrance, and to be always in a poſture for active ſervice. I need not tell you what theſe incumbrances are. In general, whatever unfits us for duty, that muſt be laid aſide. More particularly, an earthly mind, pride of heart, and the love

of

of ſenſual pleaſures, are three great enemies to holy diligence in the work of the Lord. Whilſt our affections lie thus low, it is impoſſible we can do any thing to purpoſe; nay, if this be their prevailing bent, we ſhall act in direct oppoſition to the laws of our Maſter. In ſhort, our firſt care ſhould be, to correct that diſorder which is within us; to get our hearts purified by the Spirit of God, and raiſed above the profits, and pleaſures, and honours, of this vain world: for "out of the heart are the iſſues of life;" and ſuch as our affections are, ſuch will the courſe of our actions be. —— But it is not enough to have our *loins* thus *girded about*, we muſt alſo, in the

2*d* place, Have *our lights burning*.——— This may import the care we ſhould beſtow, to have our minds furniſhed with the knowledge of our duty; for as ſervants cannot work to any purpoſe in the dark, ſo neither can we be good and fruitful Chriſtians, without a competent knowledge of that divine law which is the only infallible rule of our conduct. If we ſhall

take

take this to be the meaning of the words, they no doubt teach us a moſt important and neceſſary leſſon; namely, That we ſhould carefully ſearch the ſacred Scriptures, and, with a ſincere and humble temper of mind, labour to know what is "the good, "and acceptable, and perfect will of our "God."

But I rather incline to underſtand this expreſſion, as importing the lively and conſtant exerciſe of all our Chriſtian graces. This indeed is the beſt preparation for our Lord's return.——To have our repentance mourning over our paſt ſins, and keeping the heart humble under a ſenſe of guilt; —our faith applying the blood of Chriſt for pardon, and deriving at the ſame time ſtrength from above for vanquiſhing our luſts, that "ſin may no more have do-"minion over us;"—our love embracing an unſeen Saviour, and extending to all his members;—our hope caſting anchor within the vail, and keeping the ſoul fixed and ſteady, amidſt all the revolutions of this changing world;—our patience triumphing over ſufferings; our meekneſs paſſing by

by injuries, bleſſing and doing good to our moſt inveterate enemies;—and, by the happy influence of all theſe, the light of our external conduct adorning our profeſſion, and engaging others to glorify our heavenly Father:—This is to have our *lights burning* indeed: this will make us ready to meet our Lord. We ſhall not be backward *to open* at his call, when all is thus cleanſed and in good order within.—And this is the preparation we ought chiefly to ſtudy.—Our readineſs to work will not avail us by itſelf; we muſt be doing, our work muſt be advancing: for in vain do we trim the lamp, if it do not ſhine and give light; in vain are *our loins girded about*, if we have nothing to do, or neglect our buſineſs.——Further, in the

3*d* place, We are here directed to be conſtantly on our guard, and to keep a ſtrict and careful *watch* till our Maſter return.

Watchfulneſs is frequently in Scripture oppoſed to ſleep: and that even the beſt Chriſtians have need of this caution, we may learn from our Saviour's parable of the

the ten virgins; where it is ſaid, (*Matth.* xxv. 5.), that "while the bridegroom tar-"ried, *they all*," that is, the wiſe as well as the fooliſh, "ſlumbered and ſlept." Carnal and unregenerated ſinners are repreſented in Scripture as being in a ſtate of death; quite ſtupid and unfeeling: but even thoſe who have got a principle of new life, may ſuffer very ſad decays; and though they do not totally expire, yet they may fall into that ſleep which is the image of death.—Though the precious oil which feeds the light, will not ſuffer it to go out; yet for want of trimming, it may grow ſo dim and obſcure, that it ſhall ſcarcely be diſcernible. Now, this, my brethren, is a very melancholy ſituation; and it highly concerneth us to guard againſt it with our utmoſt care. We read of ſome who loſt their firſt love; nay, Paul complains of the Hebrews, that they had loſt even their former knowledge, and had need "to be taught "again, which be the firſt principles of the "oracles of God."——"The hand of the "diligent maketh rich; and he that is "ſlothful is brother to him that is a great "waſter."

" waſter." Indeed, if holineſs were natural to us, then it might abide with us, and grow up of its own accord, without any care on our part: but as it is of a foreign extraction, and as our hearts are choaked up with noxious weeds, this precious ſeed muſt be watched over, and carefully tended, otherwiſe it will ſtarve and decay. The ſleeping Chriſtian cannot thrive; and if he be ſurpriſed in that condition, when his Maſter calls, how great ſhall his diſorder be! We ſhould therefore beware of ſlothfulneſs; we have ſtill work to do, and God hath not allowed us one moment more than is needful.———Let us then awake to our buſineſs; let us never think we have finiſhed our taſk ſo long as there is any part of the day to run; but let us imitate the great Apoſtle of the Gentiles, who, notwithſtanding his high attainments in religion, yet " did not think he " had already obtained, either was al- " ready perfect; but, forgetting the things " which were behind, and reaching forth " unto thoſe things which were before, " he preſſed towards the mark, for the " prize

" prize of the high calling of God in Chriſt " Jeſus."

But we may conſider *watchfulneſs* in another light; namely, as a duty ariſing from our preſent circumſtances of danger. ——And in this view the neceſſity of it will appear unſpeakably great; for though we could acquire ſuch a ſtock of graces, that we needed not make any further addition to them; nay, though we might even lie down and ſleep, without any apprehenſion of their decay; yet if we be in danger from without, if thieves may break through and ſteal our treaſure, then of neceſſity we muſt be conſtantly on our guard: nor is it wiſe in us to drop our watch for one moment.——And who can doubt that this is our ſituation? " Watch " and pray," ſaid our Saviour, " that ye " enter not into temptation." So great is our danger, that our own vigilance is not ſufficient to ſecure us; we muſt call in foreign aſſiſtance, we muſt implore the divine aid; for " unleſs an almighty guar- " dian keep the city, the watchman wa- " keth in vain."——Yea, when Satan deſired

fired to have Peter, that he might "ſift "him as wheat," our Saviour himſelf, who had encountered this enemy, and knew his ſtrength, prayed for his zealous diſciple, that his faith might not fail. And if both *watchfulneſs* and *prayer* be neceſſary for our defence, alas! what ſhall become of thoſe who neglect both? One compares the gracious ſoul to a ſhip richly laden; which is the greater temptation to pirates upon that very account. I ſay not this to diſcourage the ſincere Chriſtian; for greater is he that is with you than all that can be againſt you: but methinks it ſhould excite you to double your watchfulneſs. If you have profited by the means of grace; — if your treaſure is increaſed; — inſtead of growing ſecure, you ſhould be the more humble and watchful upon that very account: — for needful is that caution, "Let him that thinketh he ſtand-"eth, take heed leſt he fall." Once more, in the

4*th* place, Our Saviour here directs us to conſider ourſelves as fellow-ſervants and members of his family; and in this view,

another part of our preparation for his coming, muſt lie in the performance of the duties we owe to each other, as well as of thoſe duties which more immediately reſpect himſelf. This is more clearly pointed out to us in the 45th and 46th verſes of this chapter, where we find a fearful threatening denounced againſt thoſe who neglect this mutual relation: "But, and if that ſervant ſay in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and ſhall begin to beat the men-ſervants, and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken: the lord of that ſervant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in ſunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers." It appears from this paſſage, that the faithful diſcharge of ſocial duties, has a higher rank in religion than many ſeem to apprehend. It is not indeed the whole of religion; neither can it be called the moſt eſſential part of it; for no doubt the duties of the higheſt claſs are thoſe which belong to the firſt table of the law, and ariſe from our firſt and moſt laſting

laſting relation. We were the ſubjects of God before we became members of human ſociety; and if we prove unfaithful to God, it cannot ſurely give him any pleaſure to behold confederated rebels living in the moſt perfect agreement among themſelves: ſo that a man may, in ſeveral reſpects, prove an agreeable, perhaps an uſeful, member of ſociety, and after all, be condemned for his ingratitude to God, and rebellion againſt his Maker. Nevertheleſs, the diſcharge of thoſe duties which we owe to one another, is of ſuch importance in religion, that I can warrantably affirm, no man ſhall be ſaved who tranſgreſſes them, or even who wilfully and habitually neglects them. ——It is not to be expected, nor indeed is it neceſſary, that I ſhould give you a detail of theſe: they are univerſally better underſtood than they are practiſed. Our duty here extends to all the different expreſſions of righteouſneſs and love; and the rule is both ſhort and plain: *All things whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do unto you, do ye even ſo to them.* The beſt offices are thoſe which promote our neighbour's ſpiritual

and eternal intereſt; and therefore religious inſtruction, friendly advice, and ſeaſonable reproof, cannot be diſpenſed with. Whatever tends to diſcourage vice, or to promote the intereſts of religion and virtue, is ſtrictly incumbent upon us, according to the power and authority which our ſtation gives us; and therefore he is but half a magiſtrate, and a poor half too, who reſents only the injury that is done to men, and overlooks thoſe horrid inſtances of impiety againſt God, which the good laws of our land authoriſe him to puniſh. In ſhort, whatever be our condition in life, there are certain duties belonging to it which we muſt perform: and I ſhall only add, that as the obligation is mutual, both parties are equally bound, and neither can with-hold from the other what is due, without an injury: nor is the ſuperior leſs ſtrictly bound to thoſe who are below him, than the inferior to thoſe who are above him; and they who poſſeſs the higheſt ſtations are equally obliged with the meaneſt of their brethren, to "live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly, in the "world," and to promote the glory of God,

and

and the welfare of human ſociety, by the faithful and conſcientious uſe of all thoſe talents which God hath put into their hands; and if they do otherwiſe, they ſhall be condemned and puniſhed by their Maſter and Judge, when he cometh again.

After this manner are we taught to make ready for our Lord's return.

We muſt lay aſide every thing that may encumber us in his ſervice; we muſt labour to know our Maſter's will, and to keep all our graces in lively and vigorous exerciſe;—particularly, we ſhould guard againſt ſlothfulneſs and ſecurity, and, from a ſenſe of our danger, keep a ſtrict and habitual watch againſt the enemies of our ſouls;—at the ſame time regarding each other as fellow-ſervants, and faithfully performing thoſe ſocial duties which belong to our ſeveral ſtations and relations. To all which I might further add, that we ſhould earneſtly look out for our Maſter's coming, and long for his ſecond and glorious appearance, when we, and all his faithful ſervants, ſhall be admitted into his immediate preſence, and be enabled to ſerve him with-

out any mixture of ſin, in another and a better world than this.

I come now to exhort you to the practice of theſe duties; for which I offer the following motives and arguments.

1ſt, then, One great argument for the preparation here recommended, may be drawn from the certainty of our Lord's return. This is aſſerted in ſo many paſſages of Scripture, that there is no room left us to doubt of it. The preſent mixt ſtate of things, renders a future judgement not only probable to reaſon, but almoſt certain and neceſſary; and the Apoſtle Paul, in the 8th chapter of his epiſtle to the Romans, derives a very ingenious, but ſubſtantial, argument in favour of this doctrine, from the preſent burdened ſtate and weary face of the creatures: nor can any who profeſſeth Chriſtianity pretend to queſtion it.—Should not this then oblige us to make ready for it? With theſe very eyes ſhall we ſee our Redeemer; and how ſhall we look him in the face, if we have been unfaithful during his abſence, and lived at random, as if none

none had power over us? Nay, methinks this very consideration, that he is now removed from us, should work upon our ingenuity, and excite us to the utmost care and diligence in his service. Every one will be doing while he sees the master present: the test of fidelity is, to mind the master's interest when he is at a distance; especially the interest of such a Master, who hath bought us from the most deplorable slavery with his own precious blood, and requires nothing at our hand, but what tends to make us happy here, and to fit us for eternal glory hereafter.

2*dly*, The uncertainty of the time of his coming, should excite us to be always busy at our work, and in a fit posture to receive him. This argument is much insisted upon by our Saviour. He often compares his coming to that of a thief in the night, who studies secrecy, and will not give any previous notice; and this seems to be the meaning of that allusion in the 36th verse, where he likens himself to one who is attending a marriage-solemnity; because, on such occasions, people are not usually ma-

ſters of their own time, which renders the ſeaſon of their return to their own houſes more uncertain. And if this be the caſe, can there be a more powerful motive to an habitual preparation?—"Behold, I come as "a thief," ſays our Saviour, in the book of the Revelation.——"Bleſſed is he that "watcheth, and keepeth his garments, leſt "he walk naked, and they ſee his ſhame." Doſt thou not know, O man, but that to-morrow thy Maſter may come to thee; or, which is the ſame thing, may call thee to him? and wilt thou not be buſy? Show us thy ſecurity for one day, and then claim that day as thine own: but if thou canſt not, how mad art thou to neglect thy buſineſs, or to leave any taſk unfiniſhed, whilſt it is in the power of thy hands to do it?——Eſpecially if it be conſidered, in the

3*d* place, That when thy Maſter returns, thy working-time is over.——What is then unfiniſhed, muſt remain ſo for ever. He comes to judge thee according to what thou haſt done, and not to call thee to perfect thy unfiniſhed labours. This, my brethren, is

is a moſt awful conſideration; we are now ſowing the ſeed for eternity, and what we ſow, that ſhall we reap. Our Maſter's order is, *Occupy till I come:* that is the term; and we can neither get it protracted nor renewed; and if we be found unfaithful, dreadful ſhall our puniſhment be; and the more dreadful upon this account, that it ſhall be perpetual, without abatement, and without end. But as I would rather chooſe to allure than frighten you to your duty, I ſhall repreſent to you, as a

4th motive to a diligent preparation for your Maſter's coming,———The glorious advancement, and bleſſed reward, of the watchful ſervants, which is mentioned in the laſt part of my text: *Verily, I ſay unto you.* It is introduced with a ſtrong aſſeveration, to denote the abſolute certainty of the thing: and O, how condeſcending is that which follows! *He ſhall gird himſelf, and make them to ſit down to meat, and will come forth and ſerve them.* Surely this is a reward, not of debt, but of grace; for how can the moſt perfect obedience merit any thing like this?—Thoſe faithful ſervants ſhall

ſhall be advanced to an honour, which, were it not promiſed, they could not lawfully hope for.—They ſhall be entertained by their Maſter at his own table;—there ſhall they feaſt without any to diſturb them. Here, indeed, whilſt we are at our work, we obtain ſome foretaſtes of this heavenly banquet; but how ſoon is the table drawn! But it ſhall not be ſo in heaven.——Here we muſt eat, as the Jews did their paſſover, "in haſte, with our loins girded, our ſhoes "on our feet, and our ſtaff in our hand." ——But in heaven we ſhall ſit down with Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, and with all our dear fellow-ſervants, never more to riſe again. O bleſſed reſt! O glorious ſociety! O delightful entertainment!——But what can theſe words mean, *He ſhall gird himſelf, and come forth and ſerve them?*——Surely this cannot be literally fulfilled: yet it muſt have a reſemblance to ſomething that is real, otherwiſe it would not have been mentioned.

Thus much we know, that on that day Chriſt ſhall beſtow ſome extraordinary marks of reſpect upon his ſervants, which "our

"ears

" ears have not yet heard, neither can our " hearts conceive."

If " there is joy in heaven over one sin- " ner that repenteth," though he is then only beginning his warfare, and has many a weary and painful step before him; if the prodigal is so kindly embraced upon his first return from feeding swine, and gets " the " wedding-ring on his finger, and the best " robe put on him;" what shall be the saint's honour in that day of the " mani- " festation of the sons of God!"

" If any man serve me," saith Christ, " let him follow me; and where I am, there " shall my servant be. If any man serve " me, him will my Father honour."—But these matters are too high for us; the glories of the upper world are far beyond our sight. ——Yet surely those discoveries which have been imparted to us, are sufficient to invite our thoughts frequently thither; and especially to excite us to the most diligent preparation for our Lord's return, " who is " gone before to prepare a place for us, and " who shall certainly come again, and re- " ceive

" ceive us unto himſelf, that where he is, " there we may be alſo."

Well, then, my dear fellow-ſervants, *Let our loins be girded about, and our lights always burning;* ere long our work ſhall be at an end, and this glorious eternal reward ſhall begin. " Let us not be weary in well- " doing; for in due ſeaſon we ſhall reap, if " we faint not." Above all, let us guard againſt ſecurity and ſelf-confidence; let us join prayer with our watching, depending upon him who hath ſaid, " My grace is " ſufficient for thee."——To whom, with the Father, and the ever-bleſſed Spirit, one God, be glory and honour, dominion and power, for evermore. *Amen.*

SER-

SERMON XIV.

1 CORINTHIANS ix. 24.

——*So run that ye may obtain.*

IN theſe words, the Chriſtian life is compared to a race, and the diſciples of Jeſus are warmly exhorted to preſs forward in their way to heaven, till they obtain the glorious prize for which they contend.

I ſhall therefore make it my buſineſs, in the following diſcourſe,

Firſt, To give you a general account of the race we have to run; and,

Secondly, To illuſtrate the fitneſs and propriety of this ſimilitude.—After which, in the

Third place, I ſhall preſs the exhortation by ſome motives and arguments.

I need not ſpend much time upon the firſt of theſe particulars. In general, the race we have to run, comprehends the whole of that duty we owe to God; namely,

ly, obedience to his laws, and ſubmiſſion to his providence; doing what he commands, and patiently enduring whatever he is pleaſed to appoint. The charge which our great Maſter hath given us, is expreſſed in theſe words: *Occupy till I come.* All the gifts of nature, of providence, and of grace, are talents put into our hands: which muſt not only be carefully kept, but diligently improved, for his glory, and our own ſpiritual advantage; otherwiſe we ſhall be condemned, not only as ſlothful, but as wicked ſervants, and puniſhed accordingly. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not," ſaith the Apoſtle James, "to him it is ſin." It is not ſufficient, barely "to deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts;" the grace of God doth further teach us, "to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly, in the world;" adding one Chriſtian grace to another, abounding more and more in the work of the Lord, till we have perfected holineſs in the fear of God.——Thus extenſive is the divine law, reaching to every part of our conduct, at all times, and in all places

and

and circumſtances. Where-ever we are, it ſpeaks to us; and if our ears are open, we may continually hear its voice behind us, ſaying, Lo! "this is the way, walk ye "in it."

But the Chriſtian life includes in it ſomething more than the mere performance of duty; the croſs lies in our way, and we ſhall never get to the end of the race, unleſs we take it up, and, with meekneſs and patience, carry it along with us.——It muſt be owned, indeed, that this, at the firſt ſight, hath rather the look of a clog or encumbrance; and the Chriſtian, while under the croſs, is very apt to think ſo: he feels his burden, and, in his own apprehenſion, moves ſo heavily, that he is afraid he ſhall never get to the end of his journey; which frequently inclines him to wiſh, that the load were removed, and ſome eaſier piece of ſervice aſſigned him. But this in reality is a miſtake: the croſs is far from being a hindrance in our way to heaven; for though a heavy material load oppreſſes the body, yet in the ſpiritual race it often happens, that the burdened

dened ſoul makes both the ſwifteſt and the ſureſt progreſs. "Tribulation worketh "patience, and patience experience, and "experience hope."—— The croſs may be called a tree both of knowledge and of life: the fruit it bears hath no deadly quality; on the contrary, it gives both ſight and health; it opens our eyes to ſee the good we ought to chooſe, and the evil we ought to ſhun; and is often made effectual, by the bleſſing of God, to purge away thoſe fatal diſtempers which ſin hath brought into our frame, to beget in us a loathing of every thing that is evil, and more ardent deſires after higher meaſures of that holineſs, which is at once the ornament and the happineſs of our nature. — The croſs doth not enfeeble us, though we erroneouſly may think ſo; it only makes us ſenſible of our weakneſs, that we may depend upon him who is "the Lord our ſtrength;" and inſtead of cruſhing us with its own weight, obligeth us to quit our hold of thoſe real incumbrances, which mar our progreſs, and hinder us to "run the race that is ſet before "us."

Thus

Thus I have given you a general view of the race we have to run. It comprehends obedience to the laws of God, and ſubmiſſion to his diſcipline; doing what he commands, and patiently enduring whatever he is pleaſed to inflict.——I am now, in the

Second place, To illuſtrate the fitneſs and propriety of this ſimilitude; and to ſhow, that the Chriſtian life doth very much reſemble a race in ſeveral important reſpects.

Thus, for example, — one in running a race muſt ſtrictly obſerve the courſe that is marked out to him: he is not at liberty to chooſe his own ground, but muſt confine himſelf to that which the judges have agreed upon; otherwiſe let him run ever ſo faſt, he can acquire no right or title to the prize. —— Now here the reſemblance is moſt exact. There is a certain limited way in which the Chriſtian muſt run, emphatically called *the way of God's commandments*. This we muſt keep with the utmoſt preciſion, "neither turning aſide "to the right hand, nor to the left." Mere activity will not avail us: we may

be very keen and buſy; but if we are not buſy according to rule, we only loſe our labour: God can never accept it as a ſervice done to him. It is abſolutely neceſſary, that we be always in a readineſs to anſwer that queſtion, "Who hath requi-"red this at your hand?"—Nothing is left to our own humour or fancy: "The "law of the Lord is perfect;" and it is equally diſhonoured when we pretend to add to it, as when we take from it. Arbitrary rules of ſtrictneſs, for which we have no warrant in the word of God, are dangerous things, and ſeldom fail in the iſſue to ſupplant that religion which is ſolid and ſaving. By this officious overdoing, the church of Rome grew up by degrees into that monſter which it is now become; for I am fully perſuaded, that all thoſe childiſh ſuperſtitions, which have long been advanced above the laws of God, were firſt introduced, many of them with a real deſign, and all of them under the ſpecious pretext, of giving aid to the divine law, and facilitating the obſervance of it.—I am very ſenſible, that the humour

mour of the preſent age doth not run this way: few need a caution againſt being "righteous over much." Nevertheleſs, as ſome ſerious well-meaning people may be in danger of making ſnares for their own conſciences, by laying down rules of conduct which are not warranted by the word of God, I am hopeful that this hint may not be altogether unuſeful. Let the holy Scriptures be your conſtant ſtudy; and what theſe enjoin, obſerve with all the care and accuracy you are capable of. Let this be your buſineſs, to find out the duty of every ſeaſon; and when you have found it, then do and ſpare not.—Thus ſhall you run lawfully; and every ſtep you make ſhall be an advance towards the prize.

Again; as running a race is a ſwift and conſtant progreſſion, ſo ought the life of a Chriſtian to be. "Whatever our hands "find to do, we muſt do it with all our "might." And we need never go far off to find work; there is enough on every ſide of us to keep us conſtantly employed.—— Let us not then be ſlothful in buſineſs, but "fervent in ſpirit, ſerving the Lord."——

" Let us never think we have already at-
" tained, either are already perfect; but
" forgetting the things which are behind,
" and reaching forth to those things which
" are before, let us press toward the mark,
" for the prize of the high calling of God
" in Christ Jesus."—" The path of the just
" is as the shining light, that shineth more
" and more unto the perfect day."——Our present attainments, instead of a resting-place, should only serve as a scaffolding to raise us up higher; and the nearer we advance to the prize, the more quick and accelerated should our motion be. Which leads me to mention another remarkable property in which the Christian life resembles a race; namely,

That there is no gaining the prize unless we hold out to the end.——It signifies nothing to start briskly, and to run fast a great part of the way; the whole ground, you know, must be passed over, otherwise the person is reputed not to have run at all. —So it is in the Christian race. The temporary profession, or practice of religion, will not avail us; we must persevere to the last; for

for it is only he who endureth to the end that ſhall be ſaved: "To him that over-"cometh," ſaid our bleſſed Lord, "will I "grant to ſit with me in my throne, even "as I alſo overcame, and am ſet down with "my Father in his throne." The charge, as I formerly obſerved to you, runs in theſe words; "Occupy till I come:" And the promiſe exactly correſponds to it; "Be thou "faithful unto the death, and I will give "thee a crown of life."

Thus, in all theſe particulars, the Chriſtian life may, with great propriety, be compared to a race.——But then it is neceſſary to obſerve, that though the reſemblance is ſufficiently ſtrong to juſtify the uſe of this figurative repreſentation; yet there are ſeveral important reſpects in which the Chriſtian race doth widely differ from all others;—Such as,

1ſt, In other races, though many may ſtart, and hold out to the end; yet none but the foremoſt receiveth the prize: *Know ye not*, ſaith the Apoſtle, in the firſt part of the verſe, *that they which run in a race, run all, but one receiveth the prize*; whereas it is

quite otherwiſe in the Chriſtian race. There may be a great diſparity among the candidates, but every one who endureth to the end ſhall be ſaved.—He who is faithful over a little, ſhall be as certainly rewarded, as he who is faithful over much; each ſhall receive a crown as large as he can wear: Whoſoever doth faithfully, is accounted by the Judge to have done well: for we find the ſame ſalutation that was addreſſed to the ſervant who had improved the many talents, addreſſed likewiſe to him who had improved the few: "Well done," (though not ſo much done,) yet ſtill it is ſaid, "Well done, "thou good and faithful ſervant; enter thou "into the joy of thy Lord."——Hence,

2dly, They who run in the Chriſtian race have no envy, no jealouſy, among themſelves; far leſs do they moleſt and hinder one another: on the contrary, the ſtronger help forward the weaker, and give them all the aſſiſtance and encouragement in their power.—Now, in other races it is not ſo; the fall of one candidate gives joy to the reſt; but they who run for the heavenly prize, would carry all the world along with them if

if they could. As the Pſalmiſt " was glad " when they ſaid unto him, Let us go into " the houſe of the Lord;" ſo every ſincere candidate for immortal glory, rejoiceth when he hears of many travellers by the way; and is ready to ſay to every one he meets, O come and let us go together to the Zion above, that city of the great King, where true riches and honours are only to be found.

3dly, They who run in other races have nothing but toil and labour till they obtain the prize; but in the Chriſtian race, the exerciſe itſelf carries part of the reward in its boſom: " Wiſdom's ways are ways of " pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace." Chriſt's yoke is eaſy, his burden is light, and his commandments are not grievous. Hear what holy David ſays, " Thy ſtatutes " have been my ſongs in the houſe of my " pilgrimage."——Sometimes, indeed, they have dark nights and ſtormy weather; " without are fightings, and within are " fears." But this is not the conſtant fare of them all, nor perhaps of any of them at all times: they have their ſeaſons of joy as

well as of grief; and they have this to comfort them amidſt all their troubles, even the aſſurance that they ſhall work together for their everlaſting benefit. Which leads me to mention a

4th diſtinguiſhing property of the Chriſtian race; namely, the certainty of gaining the prize at laſt. Did the Chriſtian run in his own ſtrength, he might not only doubt, but deſpair of ſucceſs: but his whole dependence is on that almighty Saviour, upon whom the Father hath laid his help: He goes up through the wilderneſs, "leaning upon the beloved;" and therefore, under his felt weakneſs, and when every thing around him wears the moſt diſcouraging aſpect, he is ſometimes enabled to triumph in the language of Paul, and to ſay, as he did, "I can do all things thro' "Chriſt that ſtrengtheneth me."——Perſeverance is not only the duty, but the privilege of all who ſet themſelves in good earneſt to run for heaven: and though the law of God obligeth them, and the new nature habitually inclines them, "to keep "under the body, and to bring it into "ſubjection;"

" ſubjection ;" yet they have far better ſecurity than any efforts of their own. Omnipotence is their guardian; and they are " kept by the power of God, through faith " unto ſalvation." Theſe, my brethren, are ſome of the endearing peculiarities of the Chriſtian race: Let me now exhort you, in the

Third place, *So to run that you may* at length *obtain.*——And, for this end, let us conſider,

1*ſt*, That many eyes are upon us:—We are ſurrounded with ſpectators, who narrowly obſerve every part of our behaviour. ——The holy angels, thoſe miniſtering ſpirits, ſent forth to miniſter to the heirs of ſalvation, look on us with a friendly concern; and as they rejoice at the firſt converſion of a ſinner, ſo we may reaſonably ſuppoſe, that all our ſtrayings from the path of life, are ſorrowfully remarked and lamented by them. On the other hand, thoſe malignant powers of darkneſs, which conſtantly go about " ſeeking whom " they may devour," are no leſs attentive

to

to our conduct.—They too mark our steps, though from a different principle: not to help, but to ensnare us; not to applaud our fidelity and diligence, but to find matter of censure and accusation against us.—Above all, the great and omniscient God hath his eye continually upon us; "he compasseth "our path, and he is acquainted with all "our ways."—He besets us behind and before, and so holds us by his right hand, that we cannot fly from his presence, nor find any covering so thick as to hide us from his sight. Think of this, my brethren, and judge whether we have not cause to be continually on our guard. We perform every action, not only in the sight of innumerable witnesses, but in the presence of that glorious Being, by whom our final doom shall be pronounced: Ought we not then to quit ourselves like men?—There is something in this motive so awful, and at the same time so animating, that I should think I affronted your reason, if I spent time in the illustration of it. We must feel its influence as soon as it is named:—Did we see with our bodily eyes what we all profess

profeſs to believe, we ſhould not wait for an exhortation to "run the race ſet before "us."

Conſider, in the 2*d* place, That many have already run this race, who are now in poſſeſſion of the glorious prize.——Paul exhorted the Chriſtians in his day to be "followers of them, who through faith and "patience inherit the promiſes." The way to heaven was not then an untrodden path; a great cloud of witneſſes had paſſed that road before the Apoſtle began to write: and we may reaſonably conclude, that vaſt multitudes have been following them during the ſeventeen hundred years which have elapſed ſince that time.——And ſhall not their example encourage us to go and do likewiſe? We ſee plainly from their ſucceſs, that there are no unſurmountable obſtacles in the way. The ſaints now in heaven were once in the ſame condition with ourſelves; they were men of like paſſions, and expoſed to the ſame temptations. The grace that ſaved them is equally ſufficient to ſave us; and (glory to God) it is as ready to be

diſpenſed

diſpenſed to us, if we aſk and ſeek, and knock for it, as they did.

Where are all thoſe illuſtrious perſons recorded in Scripture? — Where are the patriarchs, the prophets, and the apoſtles of our Lord?—Where are thoſe heroic ſpirits, of whom we read in the 11th chapter of the epiſtle to the Hebrews, "who through faith "ſubdued kingdoms, wrought righteouſ-"neſs, obtained promiſes, ſtopped the mouths "of lions, quenched the violence of fire, "eſcaped the edge of the ſword, out of "weakneſs were made ſtrong, waxed valiant "in fight, and turned to flight the armies "of the aliens?" — Where are thoſe faithful martyrs, "who had trial of cruel mockings, "and ſcourgings, yea moreover of bonds "and impriſonment; who were ſtoned, who "were ſawn aſunder, who were tempted, "who were ſlain with the ſword; who "wandered about in ſheep-ſkins, and goat-"ſkins, being deſtitute, afflicted, torment-"ed; of whom the world was not worthy?" —Where are thoſe holy ſouls, with whom we ourſelves were perſonally acquainted, and whom we dearly loved, but who are

now

now ſeparated from our ſociety, and have left us behind them in this vale of miſery and tears?—They are ſurrounding the throne of God moſt high, ſinging the ſong of Moſes, and of the Lamb; aſcribing glory to him who waſhed them from their ſins in his own blood, and made them kings and prieſts unto God, even his Father.—Look above you, O Chriſtians! to this glorious company; and the deſire of being one day joined to them, will reconcile you to all the hardſhips of the Chriſtian courſe, and make you run with patience the race ſet before you.

Conſider, in the *3d* place, Who are your fellow-travellers.——You are not only going to a glorious and triumphant ſociety, but you go in company with perſons of the greateſt dignity and worth, "even the "ſaints, thoſe excellent ones in the earth," whom God hath choſen and ſet apart for himſelf.——And this, my brethren, is an encouraging circumſtance. We find, that even an Elias, when he ſuppoſed himſelf alone by the way, both wiſhed and prayed for death, ſaying, "It is enough, now, O "Lord

" Lord God; take away my life; for I " am not better than my fathers."—And therefore God was pleaſed, in great condeſcenſion, to rectify the miſtake of his ſervant, by aſſuring him, that there were many thouſands unknown to him, who had not bowed the knee to Baal; and that the road to the celeſtial country, even in that corrupt and degenerate age, was not ſo unfrequented and ſolitary as he imagined. The ſaints are not only hid from the world, but frequently miſtaken by one another; which tempts many of them to think, that the kingdom of Chriſt is of a very narrow extent, and the number of his ſubjects exceeding ſmall: but were our eyes opened, and the ſcales of pride and prejudice removed, we ſhould ſee a far more goodly company than we expected.—And ought not this to animate us in our Chriſtian race? Have we all the ſaints on earth for our companions? are we going to ſaints and angels in heaven? and ſhall not this fire us with an heroic ardour *to run ſo as we may* at length *obtain?* Eſpecially if we conſider, in the

4th

4*th* place, The nature of thoſe duties which our Lord hath required of us;—or if you pleaſe, (to keep by the alluſion), the goodneſs of that road in which we are to run for the heavenly prize.——"The "law is holy," ſaith the Apoſtle Paul, "the commandment is holy, juſt, and "*good:*" not only infinitely reaſonable in itſelf, but infinitely kind and obliging to us, inaſmuch as it enjoins nothing but what tends to purify and perfect our natures, and to qualify us for the enjoyment of a never-ending felicity.——In the frame of the moral law, God appears rather like a father than a ſovereign, exacting nothing as a teſt of our ſubjection to his authority, but what is ſo neceſſarily connected with our own true happineſs, that a liberty to act otherwiſe would in reality be a licence to deſtroy ourſelves.

5*thly*, We have a kind ſympathiſing and unerring Guide, who came from heaven to earth to teach us the way from earth to heaven:—yea, he hath not only pointed out the road to us, but hath actually gone before us, and now calls upon us to follow his

his ſteps. —— " Behold," ſaith God by the Prophet Iſaiah, " I have given him for a " witneſs to the people, a leader and com- " mander to the people."—— This is the peculiar office of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; and his mildneſs and condeſcenſion in the diſcharge of this office, are beautifully deſcribed by the ſame prophet: " He ſhall " feed his flock like a ſhepherd; he ſhall " gather the lambs with his arm, and car- " ry them in his boſom, and gently lead " thoſe that are with young."——He doth not deſpiſe the weakneſs of his people; for he knoweth their frame, and " is touched " with a feeling of their infirmities, ha- " ving been in all points tempted like as " they are." Like as a father pitieth his children, ſo the Lord pitieth thoſe that fear him. " He doth not break the brui- " ſed reed, nor quench the ſmoking flax;" on the contrary, " he giveth power to the " faint, and to them that have no might " he increaſeth ſtrength."——He will not ſuffer them to be tempted above what they are able; but in the emphatical language of holy writ, " he debates with them in " meaſure,

" meaſure, and ſtays his rough wind in " the day of his eaſt wind." When they paſs through the fire, and through the water, he is with them: and though, for wiſe and holy reaſons, their eyes may be holden that they cannot perceive him; yet with a powerful, though inviſible hand, he ſupports and guides their weary ſteps; according to that gracious promiſe, " I will " bring the blind by a way that they " know not, and lead them in paths which " they have not known; I will make " darkneſs light before them, and crooked " ways ſtraight. Theſe things will I do " for them, and not forſake them."——O what a joyful conſideration is this! that the great Captain of ſalvation is our Guide, who can cover our head, and heal our wounds; raiſe us up when we fall, and perfect ſtrength in our weakneſs. " Fear not," ſays he, " for I am with thee; be not diſ- " mayed, for I am thy God; I will ſtrength- " en thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will " uphold thee with the right hand of my " righteouſneſs."

My 6*th* and *laſt* motive ſhall be taken

from the unſpeakable worth of the prize to be obtained.——This is no other than "heaven itſelf;"—"eternal life;"—"an "exceeding and eternal weight of glory;"—"an incorruptible crown;"—"an undefiled "inheritance;"—"a glory which eye hath "not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither can the "heart of man conceive."—"It doth not "yet appear," ſaith the Apoſtle John, "what "we ſhall be; but we know that when he "ſhall appear, we ſhall be like him, for we "ſhall ſee him as he is." Then ſhall we be thoroughly changed into the image of our Lord. We ſhall love him without meaſure, and praiſe him without end; we ſhall ſerve him without wearineſs, and thoſe manifold imperfections which ſtain our moſt holy duties while on earth. Nay, our bodies being raiſed by the power and ſpirit of our Redeemer, who is the "plague of death, and "the deſtruction of the grave," ſhall be faſhioned like unto his own glorious body; whoſe preſence we ſhall for ever enjoy, and whoſe matchleſs love, that paſſeth knowledge, we ſhall eternally celebrate with the church of the firſt-born.

This,

This, my brethren, is the glorious prize for which we are called to contend. And can any thing fire our ambition if this do not?——What buſtle do men make for an earthly crown, when, lo! death is at hand to pluck it off their heads, and to throw it in the duſt?—and ſhall not we contend for a heavenly crown, a regal dignity and power, which, when once obtained, ſhall never be taken from us?——"Wherefore gird up the "loins of your mind, be ſober, and hope "to the end, for the grace that is to be "brought unto you at the revelation of "Jeſus Chriſt."——Let us henceforth "lay "aſide every weight, and the ſin which doth "ſo eaſily beſet us, and let us run with pa- "tience the race that is ſet before us; look- "ing unto Jeſus, the author and finiſher of "our faith; who for the joy that was ſet "before him, endured the croſs, deſpiſing "the ſhame, and is ſet down at the right "hand of the throne of God."—To him let our waiting eyes be continually directed; and whilſt we run in obedience to his command, let us humbly and fervently addreſs him in the words of the devout Pſalmiſt,

with which I ſhall conclude:——" Unto " thee, O Lord, do I lift up my ſoul. O " my God, I truſt in thee, let me not be " aſhamed.——Shew me thy ways; Lord, " teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy " truth, and guide me; for thou art the " God of my ſalvation, on thee do I wait " all the day." *Amen.*

SER-

SERMON XV.

ROMANS xii. 11.

——*Fervent in ſpirit, ſerving the Lord.*

IT uſually happens, ſaith one, that in times of peace and outward proſperity, the church, like a river whoſe channel is enlarged, loſeth as much in depth as it gains in breadth: I wiſh I could not add, that the preſent ſtate of the church in our own land, ſerves not only to illuſtrate the propriety of this ſimilitude, but likewiſe to confirm the truth of the obſervation. As we have long enjoyed, in a very diſtinguiſhed manner, the protection and countenance of civil authority, the number of profeſſors is indeed greatly increaſed; but though the *forms* of godlineſs are practiſed by many, there is too juſt cauſe to complain, that the genuine *power* of it is felt by few. Where are the perſons who make

religion their buſineſs, and apply themſelves to it as the "one thing needful?" How few are to be found, who exemplify thoſe ſcriptural repreſentations of the Chriſtian's work and duty;—"fighting the "good fight of faith;"—"running with "patience the race ſet before them;"—"preſſing toward the mark, for the prize "of the high calling of God in Chriſt Je-"ſus?"——Alas! my brethren, the far greater number, if they be going forward at all, it is with ſuch a ſlow and ſtaggering pace, as can neither edify their brethren, nor yield any real comfort to themſelves: "their light," inſtead of "ſhining before "men," like the dim twinkling of a candle, ſunk and expiring in the ſocket, is ſcarcely diſcernible.

For exciting ſuch decayed and languiſhing Chriſtians to "ſtrengthen the things "which remain, that are ready to die," I ſhall at preſent take occaſion, from the words I have read to you, *firſt*, to explain; and *ſecondly*, to recommend that *fervour of ſpirit*, with which the Apoſtle exhorteth us to *ſerve the Lord*.

Fervour

Fervour in general, is oppoſed to lukewarmneſs or indifference; and denotes that edge or keenneſs, that activity and diligence, which we commonly exert in the purſuit of any object we highly value and wiſh to poſſeſs. —— Now the *fervour* whereof my text ſpeaks, hath religion, or the *ſervice of God*, for its object: Love to God is the principle, the law of God is the rule, and his glory the end, of all its operations. The *fervent* Chriſtian is habitually on the ſtretch to anſwer the great purpoſes for which he was made and redeemed; his underſtanding is employed in ſearching out the mind of God, ſo far as it regards the conduct of his creatures; his will is firmly and reſolutely determined to perform whatever ſhall appear to be his duty; his affections are inſpired with holy life and vigour: in conſequence of which, his executive powers are all ready to perform their ſeveral parts; the tongue to ſpeak, the hands to give, or to do what is required, and the feet to run in the way of God's commandments. In ſhort, the whole man is engaged in the

ſervice of God: ſo that religion becomes his conſtant and moſt delightful occupation; he "ſtrives" with all his might "to enter in "at the ſtrait gate;" and counts nothing too much to be done, or too hard to be endured, for the enjoyment of that God whom he moſt ardently loves, and to whom he is entirely devoted.——This, my brethren, is to be *fervent in ſpirit.*

But as there are ſeveral counterfeits of this gracious temper, I ſhall endeavour to ſelect thoſe peculiar properties of true Chriſtian *fervour*, that chiefly diſtinguiſh it from thoſe deluſive appearances by which too many impoſe both upon themſelves and others.——Let it be obſerved then, in the

1*ſt* place, That as *the ſervice of God* is the proper object of true Chriſtian *fervour*, this renders it neceſſary that we be thoroughly acquainted with the laws of God, that we may know what particular ſervices he requires of us, and will accept at our hands. A miſtake here is of the moſt dangerous conſequence: for if once we ſtep aſide from the path of duty, the faſter we run, the farther

farther we depart from the right way, and our return to it becomes the more uncertain and difficult. Saul was very *fervent in ſpirit*, when he "breathed out threatenings "and ſlaughter againſt the diſciples of the "Lord," and "verily thought that he ought "to do many things contrary to the name "of Jeſus of Nazareth:" And yet this *fervour* of his, had not ſovereign grace ſtopped him in his mad career, would only have hurried him downward to that hot and dark place from whence it moſt certainly ſprung. —We have heard of ſome who, according to our Saviour's prediction, "thought they "did God ſervice when they killed his peo-"ple;" and the church of Rome continues at this day to afford an awful inſtance of this kind, whoſe *burning zeal*, as indeed it may literally be called, hath already conſumed all that was mortal of ſome millions of ſaints; and yet, inſtead of being quenched by ſuch a deluge of blood, doth ſtill blaze out as fiercely as ever, where it is not controlled by ſuperior force.—— I have quoted theſe ſtrong examples for illuſtrating the difference betwixt true Chriſtian *fervour*, and

and that eagerneſs of ſpirit which frequently uſurps its name; and to make you ſenſible how neceſſary it is that we ſtudy the "good and perfect will of God," for directing our zeal, and confining it to that ſphere in which it may and ought to move.

2*dly*, As our *fervour* ſhould be employed in the *ſervice of God*, or in thoſe duties that God hath plainly commanded; ſo it ought likewiſe to aim at his glory; otherwiſe it is an unhallowed paſſion, which corrupteth and debaſeth every thing that proceeds from it.—The want of a right aim appears to have been the principal error of the ſcribes and Phariſees; for moſt of our Saviour's reproofs evidently turn upon this very thing. They prayed, they faſted, they gave alms, and "compaſſed ſea and land," to gain proſelytes to the Jewiſh religion; all which were very commendable in their own nature:—But herein lay their fault: They did all "to be ſeen of men;" popular applauſe, and the advancement of their own intereſt, were the ends they aimed at; not the approbation of God, nor the advancement of his honour and intereſt in the world.——

Thus

Thus it often happens, when religion is in credit, that many uſe it as a political engine for helping them up into a higher place, and appear very warm in profeſſing their regard to it; but no ſooner is that carnal fuel with-drawn, than the flame expires, or perhaps is carried over to the oppoſite ſide, and burns as fiercely againſt religion, as ever it ſeemed to do for it.——Whereas true Chriſtian *fervour* carries the perſon beyond himſelf to that God whom he adores; and inſtead of being cooled by the profane mockery, or hatred, or perſecution, of wicked men, it rather becomes more vigorous and active, and exerts itſelf in proportion to the oppoſition it meets with. If God is glorified by his ſufferings, the *fervent* Chriſtian hath gained his end: like David, he is willing to be ſtill "more vile," ſtill more afflicted; and with the Apoſtle Paul, he hath no higher ambition, than that "Chriſt may be magnified "in his body, whether it be by life or by "death." Which leads me to obſerve, in the

3d place, That this gracious temper extends its regards to all God's command-

ments.

ments. It declines no duty that bears the ſtamp of his authority: for as the glory of God is the great ſcope of all its actings, whatever tends to promote that, immediately becomes the object of its choice, and the matter of its moſt delightful and vigorous exerciſe. Now here the hypocrite is always found halting; he picks out the eaſieſt parts of duty, ſuch as have leaſt of ſelf-denial in them, and moſt of that outward ſplendor which attracts the obſervation of others. If he is rich, he may abound in alms-deeds, eſpecially in thoſe inſtances of charity which are moſt likely to make a noiſe in the world, that his fame may ſpread abroad, and bring him the tribute of praiſe from afar. He may attend upon the public ordinances of religion, and ſit like one of the people of God, with a becoming air of warm devotion: but could your eye follow him into his own houſe, you ſhould there behold a wonderful alteration, perhaps a total neglect both of family and ſecret prayer, or at beſt ſuch a cold and lifeleſs worſhip, as ſcarcely deſerved the name of "bodily exerciſe" itſelf. Whereas the upright Chriſtian "is in the

"fear

" fear of the Lord all the day long." He conſiders his Judge as evermore preſent with him: this awakens his mind, and enlivens his devotion, and hath a more powerful influence upon his conduct, than the applauſe or cenſure of ten thouſand worlds: this makes him fervent in every part of duty; yea as fervent in the ſevereſt acts of ſelf-denial, as in thoſe inſtances of obedience which are accompanied with the moſt immediate advantage or pleaſure.—A

4th diſtinguiſhing property of true Chriſtian *fervour* is this: It will make us peculiarly attentive to our own behaviour, and begin with correcting what is faulty in ourſelves.—Many exclaim againſt the vices of others, who are extremely partial and indulgent to their own. To ſuch our Apoſtle addreſſes a very ſharp reproof, in the ſecond chapter of this epiſtle, at the beginning: " Therefore, thou art inexcuſable, " O man, whoſoever thou art that judgeſt: " for wherein thou judgeſt another, thou " condemneſt thyſelf; for thou that judg- " eſt, doſt the ſame things.——And think- " eſt thou this, O man, that judgeſt them " which

" which do such things, and dost the same, " that thou shalt escape the judgement of " God?"——Nothing can be more disingenuous, than for people to profess a hatred of sin, and a mighty anxiety to have others reclaimed from it, when their own conduct proclaims that they do not hate it in themselves. That *fervour* which is of the right kind, will first " cast out the beam out of " our own eye," before it will suffer us to " behold the mote that is in our brother's " eye." It will discover to us so many things amiss in our own vineyards, that we shall neither find leisure nor inclination to pry officiously into our neighbour's vineyard, till these are amended. The *fervent* Christian will take no rest, till the enemies of his God be subdued within his own breast: " He will never think that he hath " already attained, either is already perfect; " but forgetting the things which are be- " hind, and reaching forth unto those things " which are before, he will press toward " the mark, for the prize of the high call- " ing of God in Christ Jesus;"—" giving all " diligence to make his calling and election " sure;"

" ſure;"—and " working out his own ſalva-
" tion with fear and trembling."—Neverthe-
leſs, in the

5th place, Though true *fervour* begins at home, yet it is not always confined there. It was the ſpeech of a wicked Cain, " Am I " my brother's keeper?" The warm-hearted Chriſtian extends his good offices to all around him; and uſeth all that power and influence which his ſtation gives him, to diſcourage vice, and to advance the kingdom of Chriſt in the world.—Is he a magiſtrate? he will not " bear the ſword in vain," but faithfully employ it for the terror of evil doers, and the protection of thoſe that do well.——Is he a miniſter? he will not " handle the word of God deceitfully;" but, without regarding the perſons or paſſions of men, he will openly declare the whole counſel of God, and, by ſound doctrine and good example, do what in him lieth to convince and reclaim the workers of iniquity, " that they may recover themſelves " out of the ſnare of the devil, who are " taken captive by him at his pleaſure."—Is he a parent or maſter? " he will walk " within

" within his houſe with a perfect heart," and adopt the reſolution of Holy David, (*Pſal.* ci. 6, 7.) " He that walketh in a per-" fect way, he ſhall ſerve me; he that " worketh deceit, ſhall not dwell within my " houſe; he that telleth lies, ſhall not tarry " in my ſight." In ſhort, whatever be his condition in life, he will embrace every opportunity that Providence affords him, of advancing the glory of God, and doing all the good he can, either to the ſouls or bodies of men.——Of this we have many eminent examples recorded in Scripture:— Righteous Lot was vexed from day to day with the unlawful deeds and filthy converſation of the Sodomites, among whom he lived; " Paul's ſpirit was ſtirred in him" when he beheld the city of Athens wholly given to idolatry; and Phinehas, the ſon of Eleazar, was both commended and rewarded, for executing righteous judgement in the camp of Iſrael, and obtained " the " covenant of an everlaſting prieſthood;" for this expreſs reaſon, *Beeauſe he was zealous for his God.*——But then I muſt add, in the

6th

6*th* and *laſt* place, That this *fervour* muſt be always under the direction of Chriſtian prudence, that it may not break out into indecent heats, and carry us beyond the limits of our office or ſtation in the ſociety to which we belong.—If we ſtep out of our proper ſphere, we treſpaſs againſt that ſubordination which the providence of God hath eſtabliſhed; and no pretence to religious zeal can juſtify our conduct. Such fervour is not inſpired by the Spirit of grace, but is the *ſtrange* and unhallowed *fire* of diſorderly paſſion, which can never find acceptance with that God, whoſe declared will it is, "that all things ſhould be done decently, "and in order."

Such, my brethren, is that *fervour of ſpirit* with which the Apoſtle exhorteth us to *ſerve the Lord.*

To recommend and enforce this gracious temper, was the *ſecond* thing propoſed in the method.—And now that I am to enter upon this part of the ſubject, I would earneſtly intreat your moſt ſerious attention. Conſider that I ſpeak not only *before* you,

but *to* you; and that not in my own name, but in the name of that glorious Perſon "by whom God will judge the world in "righteouſneſs; whereof he hath given aſ-"ſurance unto all men, in that he raiſed "him from the dead." That you may be ready for that awful trial, and appear with humble boldneſs in his preſence, when careleſs and trifling ſinners ſhall hang their heads, and ſtand ſpeechleſs and ſelf-condemned before his tremendous throne; this is the errand upon which I come to you; no other, no lower errand than this. — If the bare title of Chriſtians would gain you admittance into the heavenly glory; if a cold and barren profeſſion of religion, or the practice of ſome eaſy and common duties, would render you meet for the inheritance of the ſaints in light; if God deſerved or required no more, than what the world and the fleſh can ſpare; I ſhould be indiſcreet for attempting to diſturb your repoſe. —But if theſe things be otherwiſe; if it ſhall profit us nothing to "call Chriſt "Lord, Lord," unleſs we "do the things "which he ſaith;" if *ſloth* be accounted

wickedneſs

wickedneſs by the righteous Judge of all the earth, and as ſuch ſhall be puniſhed by him in the great day of retribution; then I ſhould be unfaithful to God, and cruel to your ſouls, if I did not ſummon you to your duty, and vehemently urge you, in the words of my text, to *be fervent in ſpirit, ſerving the Lord.*——Conſider, in the

1*ſt* place, That God deſerves the moſt zealous and active ſervice we can pay to him. Surely this aſſertion doth not require a formal proof; the evidence of its truth is ſo plain and obvious, that the moſt ſimple and illiterate muſt perceive it at once.—— Dare any of you ſay that it is poſſible to render unto God more than you owe him? If you ſhould, I need not go far for arguments to confute you; I can fetch them from yourſelves, from every member of your bodies, from every faculty of your ſouls.——Who made thee, O man? This is the firſt queſtion that children are taught to anſwer; though, alas! it is to be feared that many grown people anſwer it like children, and need to be ſent to ſchool again to learn its meaning. Is God thy Creator?

was it he who "clothed thee with ſkin "and fleſh, and fenced thee with bones "and ſinews?" was it he who breathed into thy noſtrils the breath of life, and made thee a living ſoul? Are all the endowments of thy mind, thy underſtanding, thy memory, thy will, and thy affections; are all theſe the fruits of his bounty? Doth his merciful viſitation every moment preſerve thy ſpirit, keep thy body from the duſt, and thy ſoul from the place of anguiſh and deſpair?——And after all, is it poſſible, that thy ſoul or thy body can exceed in his ſervice, or be employed with too much zeal for his honour? Stand forth, O man! and reply if thou canſt. What! doth this plain, I had almoſt called it this childiſh, queſtion put thee to a ſtand? How inexcuſeable then is thy ſloth? How juſt, and, Oh! how dreadful, muſt thy condemnation be?

But, my brethren, theſe are not all the mercies you have received, and are daily receiving from God. He is not only your Creator, your Preſerver, and Benefactor; but he hath bound you to his ſervice by the

the ſtill more endearing ties of redeeming grace and love: He ſent his own Son into the world to ſave you, to ſave you by his death: Amazing goodneſs! to ſhed his blood for the expiation of your guilt: And can you exceed in your gratitude to ſuch a friend? is it poſſible you can render unto him more than is due, or ſerve him with too great zeal and *fervour?*

But, 2*dly*, God not only deſerves ſuch ſervice as I am pleading for; he likewiſe demands it, peremptorily demands it, and will not be put off with any thing leſs.—— "Be not deceived," ſaith this holy Apoſtle, "God is not mocked; for whatſoever a "man ſoweth, that ſhall he alſo reap: he "that ſoweth to the fleſh, ſhall of the fleſh "reap corruption; and he that ſoweth to "the Spirit, ſhall of the Spirit reap life "everlaſting." If any imagine that Chriſt came into the world to relax their obligations to a holy life, they are groſsly miſtaken; and if they act upon that principle, they ſhall find themſelves fatally diſappointed at laſt. St Paul knew of no ſuch indulgence, when he wrote to Titus,

that " the grace of God, which bringeth " ſalvation, teacheth us, that denying un- " godlineſs and worldly luſts, we ſhould " live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in " this preſent world."———Our Saviour gave countenance to no ſuch opinion, when he exhorted his diſciples to " ſtrive " to enter in at the ſtrait gate;" and told them in plain and awful terms, that " ex- " cept their righteouſneſs ſhould exceed " the righteouſneſs of the ſcribes and Pha- " riſees, they ſhould in no caſe enter in- " to the kingdom of heaven." This, my brethren, is the uniform language of holy writ; the words of my text are clear and ſtrong; and it deſerves our notice, that they are part of an epiſtle wherein the grace of the new covenant is moſt accurately deſcribed, and zealouſly defended; which, no doubt, muſt add a conſiderable weight to them.——The ſlothful profeſſor counteracts the whole deſign of the goſpel; for the plan of man's redemption was ſo wiſely laid, that not only the comfort of the Chriſtian, but his improvement in holineſs alſo, ſhould be gradually advanced

vanced to full maturity. The design of Christ's death was not merely to reconcile God to us, but likewise to reconcile us to God; that his generous and unmerited love might overcome our enmity, make us ashamed of our ingratitude, and powerfully "constrain us to live, not unto ourselves, "but unto him who died for us, and rose "again."—A

4*th* motive to *fervour* and diligence in *the service of God*, ariseth from the difficulties that attend our duty. The Christian's work is compared to a warfare; he must dispute every inch of ground, and fight his way through surrounding enemies. It is no easy matter "to pluck out "a right eye, and to cut off a right hand;" that is, to renounce those sins to which we have been so long habituated, that they are in a manner become parts of ourselves, and no less dear to us than the most useful and necessary members of our body: yet to this we must consent before we can enter into the kingdom of heaven.——It appears a hard command that God gave to Abraham, "Take now thy son, thine only

" ſon Iſaac, whom thou loveſt; and get " thee into the land of Moriah, and offer " him there for a burnt-offering, upon " one of the mountains that I ſhall tell " thee of." But is not that other command at leaſt equally ſevere, Take now thy luſt, thy beloved luſt, from which thou haſt promiſed thyſelf the greateſt returns of profit or pleaſure, bring it hither immediately, and ſlay it before me, without the ceremony of one parting embrace? This, my brethren, is difficult work indeed. Iſaac lay meekly and patiently on the altar: but ſo will not our luſts; no, they will ſtruggle, and cry, and plead for mercy, and uſe every inſinuating method of addreſs, to prevent, or at leaſt to retard the ſtroke.——But neither is this all: thoſe inward corruptions, formidable as they are, yet are they not the only enemies we have to grapple with: The devil is an adverſary both cunning and ſtrong, very formidable by his power, as " the roaring lion;" but ſtill more formidable by his craft, as that " old ſerpent," who can vary his ſhape, and put on the appearance of an angel of light,

light, that, in a form ſo ſpecious, he may get acceſs to our hearts with greater eaſe, and fill them with his poiſon, before we are aware.——This earth too upon which we tread is full of ſnares: and every ſtate or condition of life hath ſome temptation or other peculiar to itſelf, as we learn from that well conceived prayer of Agur, (*Prov.* xxx. 8, 9.), "Remove far from me vanity "and lies; give me neither poverty, nor "riches, feed me with food convenient "for me: *leſt I be full, and deny thee*, and "ſay, who is the Lord? or *leſt I be poor*, "*and ſteal*, and take the name of my God "in vain."—Beſides, in the ordinary courſe of events, "all that will live godly in "Chriſt Jeſus, muſt ſuffer perſecution" in one kind or other. The Chriſtian is bound not only to avoid conformity to the world, but, on all proper occaſions, to teſtify his diſlike of its corrupt maxims and practices; which cannot fail to draw upon him a conſiderable ſhare of hatred and reſentment. Singularity is enough to beget ill will: but if a perſon ſhall not only uſe different manners, but likewiſe condemn the

the manners of thoſe among whom he lives, which the moſt prudent and modeſt diſciple of Jeſus may ſometimes find himſelf obliged to do; this will not eaſily be forgiven: ſuch a one can expect no better treatment than Lot had from the Sodomites, who could not bear that a fellow, as they called him, "who came in to ſo-"journ," ſhould pretend to be their judge. ——Such are the difficulties that attend religion; and do not theſe make zeal or *fervour* neceſſary! — I ſhall only add, in the

4*th* place, That we ſhould *be fervent in ſpirit, ſerving the Lord;* becauſe, as I have already obſerved, it is abſolutely impoſſible that we can do too much. Were we in any danger of exceeding, there would no doubt be cauſe to moderate our zeal: but this is not the caſe; for after "we "have done all thoſe things which are "commanded us," we ſhall ſtill have reaſon to ſay, "We are unprofitable ſervants; "we have done that which was our duty "to do." — True it is, that in particular exerciſes of religion, there may be an over-

overdoing; for one duty may juſtly be ſaid to exceed, when it thruſts out another of greater, or even of equal importance, or which is more the duty of the ſeaſon than itſelf; but ſo long as we regulate our ſervices by the word of God, in which caſe alone they are proper acts of obedience, we need not be afraid of becoming "righ-"teous overmuch." One thing is certain, that the moſt ſerious Chriſtians, when they came to die, have always lamented their former negligence: and the time is at hand, when all the world ſhall confeſs, that holy diligence was the trueſt wiſdom; and that they, and they only, made choice of the better part, who minded the "one thing "needful," and were *fervent in ſpirit, ſerving the Lord.*

And now, my dear friends, my deſign upon the whole, is to excite you to a proper concern about the ſalvation of your precious and immortal ſouls. It is not a ſyſtem of opinions that will carry any man to heaven: our knowledge of the truth ſhall only ſerve to condemn us, if we do not

not receive the truth into our hearts, and ſuffer it to influence both our temper and practice. I am far from thinking that men may be ſaved in any religion, however falſe, provided only they be ſincere in the belief, and obedient to the dictates, of that religion they profeſs; but of this I am fully perſuaded, on the other hand, that no religion can ſave a man who is not ſerious in it, and who doth not yield himſelf entirely to its government. Can it avail us any thing, that we profeſs the *true* religion, if we ourſelves are *falſe* to that religion? No, ſurely: The religion indeed is good, but it is not *our* religion; it is our book that contains the true religion, but not our heart; and therefore it can no more ſave us, than the beſt food can nouriſh us, and preſerve our life, which only ſtandeth upon the table, or which never goeth farther than our mouth.

Let me therefore intreat you to comply with the Apoſtle's exhortation in my text. I ſpeak to you who are Chriſtians *indeed*; becauſe you alone are in a capacity of *ſerving the Lord;* for "they that are in the "flesh,"

" flesh," who were never cut off from the natural stock, and ingrafted into Christ the true vine, such persons, the Apostle tells us, (*Rom.* viii. 8.) " cannot please God." They may perform the outward acts of duty, they may even do them with a considerable degree of *natural fervour*; but all the while their most specious services are only " dead works," offered up with " strange " fire," which cannot ascend to God with acceptance.—— I speak therefore to the living members of Christ, to those who are regenerated by the Spirit of God; and my request to you is, that, from this time forward, you should " stir up the gift of God " that is in you," and be *fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.*

The declining interest of religion requires all the support you can give it. Men are wearing out of acquaintance with God; nor is it greatly to be wondered at, seeing his image is so faintly to be discerned, even upon those who are really his children. Look around you, and observe how active and violent wicked men are in the service of Satan; their pace, like " the driving

" of

" of Jehu, the ſon of Nimſhi, is ſwift and " furious." With what zeal, with what carefulneſs, with what ſelf-denial,—I had almoſt ſaid, with what fear and trembling, —do many of them work out their own damnation! " drawing iniquity with cords " of vanity, and ſinning as with a cart- " rope!"—And will you be cold and negligent, nay, timorous and ſhamefaced, in the ſervice of the true and living God? Oh! how unſeemly, how ſcandalous, how hurtful were this! hurtful to yourſelves, hurtful to your fellow Chriſtians, hurtful even to the wicked with whom you converſe: they know that heaven and hell are in direct oppoſition, and conſequently that the roads which lead to them muſt be widely diſtant from each other; and therefore they will never be perſuaded that they ſhall be thruſt down into utter darkneſs, if ſuch as you, who in appearance are treading the ſame path that they do, ſhall get to heaven at laſt.——Ungrateful ſervants! how hath your Redeemer deſerved this at your hands? Is this the way to gain mens hearts to the love of holineſs? Would you wiſh

wiſh the world to write after ſo imperfect and blotted a copy as you ſet before them? I beſeech, I obteſt you, by all the regard you have for the glory of God, your own comfort, and the good of others, that henceforth you would diſtinguiſh yourſelves more viſibly from "the men of the "world, who have their portion in this "life."——"Have no fellowſhip with the "unfruitful works of darkneſs, but rather "reprove them." Let Chriſtianity be ſo deeply engraved on every part of your conduct, that he who runs may read whoſe ſervants you are, and thus God may be glorified in his ſaints.——It is a mean inglorious aim, merely to keep within the limits which divide the lawful from the forbidden ground: Show that you are men of "another ſpirit," by "following the "Lord fully," and ſtraining every nerve, as it were, to attain the higheſt perfection of which our nature is capable in its preſent imperfect ſtate. Let faith realiſe to you the life of Jeſus; and beg of God, for Chriſt's ſake, that he, by his Spirit, may kindle that holy fire in your hearts, which

which ſhall gradually conſume all your droſs, and carry you ſwiftly forward to the Zion above, that imperial city of the great King, where, like thoſe flaming miniſters who ſurround his throne, you ſhall ſerve God day and night in his temple, without interruption, without imperfection, and without wearineſs. To which exalted felicity, may God, of his infinite mercy, bring us all in due time, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. *Amen.*

SER-

SERMON XVI.

NUMBERS xiv. 24.

But my ſervant Caleb, becauſe he had another ſpirit with him, and hath FOLLOWED ME FULLY; him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his ſeed ſhall poſſeſs it.

I PROPOSE to recommend to your imitation this illuſtrious ſervant of the Moſt High God, whoſe name is recorded with ſuch diſtinguiſhed honour in the paſſage I have juſt now read in your hearing. *Caleb followed the Lord fully*, and obtained a glorious reward: and if we hope or wiſh to be rewarded as he was, reaſon teacheth us, that we ſhould walk in his ſteps, and do as he did.

But what are we to underſtand by *following the Lord fully?*—This queſtion is firſt in order; and after I have endeavoured to give a ſatisfying anſwer to it, I ſhall then proceed to preſs the duty by ſome motives and arguments.

LET us begin with inquiring what we are to underſtand by *following the Lord fully*.

And here I muſt obſerve in the entrance, that no man can *follow the Lord* at all, till once he be acquainted with him: "For he "that cometh to God, muſt believe that he "is, and that he is a rewarder of them that "diligently ſeek him." A ſlaviſh reluctant ſubjection there may be; but there cannot be a voluntary, far leſs an unreſerved, obedience, without affectionate truſt and filial confidence. Before we can *follow God*, we muſt not only know that he is ſupreme, and hath a *right* to command; but we muſt likewiſe believe, that he is *worthy* to command, and infinitely poſſeſſed of all thoſe perfections which qualify him to govern the creatures he hath made. Two things we muſt be thoroughly perſuaded of? *firſt*, That the laws of our Sovereign are righteous and good; and, *next*, That he is both able and willing to protect us in his ſervice. —And indeed, my brethren, had we never offended God, theſe views alone would have been ſufficient inducements to *follow*

him

him fully: but as we are guilty creatures, and liable to punishment, some farther discoveries are now become necessary. We need something to vanquish those fears of wrath, which would rather prompt us to fly from the presence of our Judge, than to make an uncertain attempt to pacify him by submission: some scheme of grace must be opened to our view, by which pardon may be dispensed to the guilty, and strength imparted to the weak, in a way that appears consistent with the honour of the divine government. Nay, we must not only know that such a scheme exists, but we on our part must cordially approve of it; and by our personal consent, ascertain our claim to that mercy and grace which it offers to sinners; that being at peace with God, we may no longer dread him as an enemy, but love him as a Father, and serve him with joy, being assured that "our labour shall not be "in vain."

This being premised, as a necessary preparative for *following the Lord fully*, the duty itself may be considered as including the following particulars:

1ſt, That we acknowledge no other Lord beſides him. One Lord we muſt have; for it is folly to imagine we can be independent and free: Man was made to ſerve; and nothing is left to him but the choice of his maſter: But more than one Lord we cannot have; unleſs by a derived or delegated authority: He who is ſupreme may appoint another to rule under him, and to enforce the obſervance of his laws; and when both concur in the ſame command, then both may be ſerved by one act of obedience: But "no man can ſerve two *oppoſite* maſters; "for either he will hate the one, and love "the other; or elſe he will hold to the one, "and deſpiſe the other. We cannot ſerve "God and Mammon." And therefore to *follow the Lord fully*, is to follow him *only*: It is to make his will the ſole and abſolute rule of our conduct, in oppoſition to our own humour, the temptations of Satan, and the corrupt maxims of a world that lieth in wickedneſs.

2dly, To *follow the Lord fully*, is to obey him without any reſerve or limitation:—it is to ſerve him with an affectionate and liberal

liberal heart;—and to do this at all times. —Each of theſe might be conſidered apart; but I have choſen to join them together under one head, as they ſerve to illuſtrate and ſupport one another.

Our obedience, I ſay, muſt be without reſerve or limitation; for unleſs we *follow the Lord* in *all* things, we cannot truly be ſaid to follow him in *any* thing. We give cauſe to ſuſpect, that when, in other inſtances, we perform the duties he enjoins, yet even in thoſe we are governed by ſomething elſe than a regard to his authority; and that though we ſeem to *follow* him, yet in reality we are proſecuting ſome intereſted ſcheme of our own, and are ſeeking ourſelves, inſtead of ſerving our God. The univerſality of our obedience, then, is the only proof of our ſincerity; for "whoſoever ſhall keep the whole law, and yet "offend in one point, is guilty of all." We do not *follow the Lord fully*, unleſs we follow him whitherſoever he leadeth us, thro' the moſt rugged paths of ſelf-denial and mortification, as well as in thoſe ſmooth delightful ways, in which we find the moſt

immediate advantage and pleaſure.—Again, we muſt ſerve him with an affectionate and liberal heart; continually aſking ſuch queſtions as theſe: "Lord, what wilt thou "have me to do?" and, "What ſhall I ren- "der unto the Lord for all his benefits?" The term *following* plainly implies this: A perſon may be dragged or driven againſt his will; but to *follow* is an act of choice: it denotes a voluntary and cheerful obedience; a ſervice of *love*, which is not ſparing or niggardly, but always deviſeth liberal things. Would we then *follow the Lord fully*, we muſt be "ready to every good "work;" and not only embrace opportunities of ſervice when they preſent themſelves; but even ſeek out opportunities of improving thoſe talents with which we are entruſted, that, as it is expreſſed in the parable, "when our Maſter returns, he may "receive his own with uſury."——I further added, that we ſhould behave after this manner at all times; that our conduct on every occaſion may be conſiſtent and uniform:—The true ſervant of the Lord muſt always be *one man*, ſpeaking the ſame language,

language, and obſerving the ſame conduct in every place and in every company. Which leads me to a

3*d*. remark of conſiderable importance; namely, That to *follow the Lord fully*, is to follow him openly, and in the face of the world. We muſt not think of ſtealing to heaven by ſome clandeſtine unfrequented path, as if we were aſhamed of being ſeen, or afraid leſt it ſhould be known to what family we belonged: This is a ſneaking cowardly artifice; ſo baſe in itſelf, and ſo ungrateful to the kindeſt, as well as to the greateſt and moſt honourable Maſter, that were it not too commonly practiſed, one ſhould ſcarcely think it needful to be mentioned.

There are two extremes into which people are apt to run, and both ought to be guarded againſt with equal care. —— Some proclaim their religion as on the houſe-tops: they love to talk of their high attainments, and diſcover an anxiety to make themſelves obſervable, and to gain the admiration and applauſe of their neighbours. This our Saviour expreſsly condemns, *Matth.* vi. from

the 1st to the 19th verse, where he tells his disciples, that they who fast or pray, or give alms, to be seen of men, only serve themselves: And what is the consequence? It is but just they should be left to reward themselves as they can; for duties done with such an aim can never be accepted by God as any part of that religious homage he requires.—— Others again, from a false modesty and bashfulness, or perhaps a pretended dislike of ostentation and hypocrisy, run into the opposite extreme: They hide their light, (if any light they have), they hide it, I say, "under a bushel," as the Scriptures express it. They go as great lengths as they dare, in a servile compliance with the humours and customs of the world; and even keep at an affected distance from every thing that might betray any serious impression of God upon their minds.

Now, the duty I am recommending lies at an equal distance from both these extremes. It is a profession that is neither ostentatious nor shamefaced; it neither courts observation, nor avoids it. The true *follower of the Lord*, keeping the laws of his Master continually

nually in his eye, performs every duty in its place and ſeaſon. It appears "a ſmall "matter to him to be judged of man's "judgement;" he endeavours "ſo to ſpeak," and ſo to act, "not as pleaſing men, but "God, which trieth the heart." He doth not ſhun the view of his fellow-creatures, but is willing to give all who chooſe it, an opportunity of learning from his conduct, the nature and ſpirit of that religion he hath embraced. He feels, and practically acknowledgeth, the divine authority of ſuch precepts as theſe:—"Let your moderation "be known to all men:"—"Provide things "honeſt in the ſight of all men:" and,—"Let your light ſo ſhine before men, that "they may ſee your good works, and glo-"rify your Father which is in heaven."—His ſoul is alarmed with that awful declaration of our Saviour, (*Luke* ix. 26.) "Who-"ſoever ſhall be aſhamed of me, and of my "words, of him alſo ſhall the Son of man "be aſhamed, when he ſhall come in his "own glory, and in his Father's glory, and "of the holy angels."——Would we then *follow the Lord fully*, we muſt confeſs him openly,

openly, and dare to be holy in ſpite of devils and men: We muſt "be blameleſs and "harmleſs, the ſons of God, without re-"buke, in the mids of a crooked and per-"verſe nation,—holding forth the word of "life." Once more, in the

4th place, To *follow the Lord fully*, is to cleave to him ſtedfaſtly when others forſake him; and to perſevere in his ſervice, even when it expoſeth us to the world's hatred, and the perſecution of wicked and unreaſonable men. —— It was on account of this brave and honourable ſingularity, that Caleb obtained the title of a man *of another ſpirit*. He was one of four, among ſome hundred thouſands, who retained his loyalty to the King of heaven: for beſides Moſes and Aaron, and his own companion Joſhua, it doth not appear that there was one diſſenting voice in all the tribes of Iſrael; the revolt was univerſal, the whole congregation rebelled againſt their God.——Nay, he was not only ſingular, but his ſingularity drew upon him the reſentment of his brethren: Orders were given "to ſtone him to death;" and they were on the point of doing it, when

when " the glory of God appearing in the " tabernacle," checked their fury, and protected the life of this illuſtrious ſaint.—— Thus it was that Caleb *followed the Lord fully;* and thus muſt we alſo do, if we aſpire to his reward. Inſtead of ſhrinking at perſecution, if that ſhould be our lot, we muſt rather " rejoice that we are counted worthy " to ſuffer ſhame" in the cauſe of our Lord; and even eſteem it a privilege, " that to us " it is given, in the behalf of Chriſt, not " only to believe in his name, but likewiſe " to ſuffer for his ſake."

The amount of all I have ſaid is this: If we would *follow the Lord fully* after the pattern in my text,—we muſt acknowledge no other Maſter beſides him:—We muſt obey him in all things: we muſt do this at all times: and ſerve " him with an affectionate " and liberal heart; not grudgingly, or as " of neceſſity;" for " the Lord loveth a " cheerful giver."——We muſt follow him openly, and in the face of the ſun;—and then we muſt perſevere in our attendance upon him, though no man ſhould join with us; nay, though earth and hell ſhould unite

their

their force, and both riſe up in arms to oppoſe us.

You have now ſeen the aim of my diſcourſe; and may I not hope to ſucceed in it? I am aſking nothing that is unreaſonable, nothing that you yourſelves can find any pretence to refuſe: All I aſk is, in the

1*ſt* place, That you ſhould be *honeſt men.* You call yourſelves Chriſtians: and what is my requeſt, but that you be Chriſtians *indeed?*—— So that in reality, it is the cauſe of your own honour I am pleading with you. A man of ſpirit and integrity, is a character that univerſally commands eſteem; but it is impoſſible to ſupport that honourable character by any other means than by *following the Lord fully.* Enemies you may have; I ought rather to have ſaid, enemies you ſhall have, ſome perhaps, perverſely and maliciouſly, who may ſlander you as hypocrites: but a ſtedfaſt and uniform perſeverance in holineſs, if it diſarm not their malice, will at length confute their reproach. Whereas your ſwerving from duty, either

to

to gain the favour of men, or to avoid their diſpleaſure, cannot fail to expoſe you to their contempt and ſcorn: Reward you they may; but, Oh! how low muſt you ſink in their eſteem!——And then what a triumph will it give to the wicked, who only wait for your halting? How will it whet their tongues, and give them an edge that ſhall pierce you to the quick? for this you may lay your account with, that their cenſures of you ſhall be far more ſevere and unmerciful, than thoſe they employ againſt others, who make no profeſſion of religion: nay, their cenſures ſhall be more ſeverely felt by yourſelves; becauſe you will find ſomething within you that tells you they are juſt.—The hardened ſinner can aſſume an air of confidence and intrepidity; conſcience being ſeared, gives him no diſturbance within; ſo that his external appearance is all he hath to attend unto: but the ſenſe of having acted wrong, will draw your attention inward, and leave your countenance to expreſs every outward ſymptom of timidity and ſelf-reproach. Whereas, by *following the Lord fully*, you ſhall by degrees acquire

acquire a firmneſs and independency of ſpirit, that will enable you at all times to behave with a genuine and well-ſupported dignity. This ſhall give you an irreſiſtible ſuperiority over the hearts of wicked men, which ſhall overawe them in ſecret, and conſtrain their homage, in the ſame proportion that it excites their hatred and envy. Thus we read, that "Herod feared John," even when he threw him into priſon; and he feared him, as St Mark informs us, purely upon this account, "becauſe he knew "that he was a juſt and holy man."

2dly, The duty I am recommending is equally neceſſary to ſecure the inward peace and tranquillity of your minds: it contributes to your intereſt, no leſs than to your honour.——How miſerable is the man who hath war and diſcord within his own breaſt! This is worſe than death; for that only tears the ſoul from the body, whereas this tears the health, the life, from the ſoul itſelf. Such a perſon reſembles "the troubled ſea when it can-"not reſt, whoſe waters caſt up mire and "dirt." Which way ſoever he turns his eyes,

eyes, the proſpect, on all hands, is dark and gloomy. Above, is the throne of an offended God; beneath, is the fire that ſhall never be quenched; and within, he feels the gnawings of the worm that dieth not: ſo that the creatures around him are his only reſource; and theſe at beſt are "deceitful brooks;"—"broken ciſterns, that can hold no water;"—"miſerable comforters," which delude him for a moment, and forſake him at the time when he ſtands moſt in need of them: "There is no peace, ſaith my God, to the "wicked."——But "light is ſown for the "righteous, and gladneſs for the upright in "heart."——"Great peace," ſaid one who knew it by experience, "great peace have "they that love thy law, and nothing ſhall "offend them;" even "the peace of God, "which paſſeth all underſtanding, ſhall keep "their hearts and minds through Jeſus "Chriſt."

My brethren, we ſhall never taſte the comforts of religion, till we become thoroughly religious, and *follow the Lord* with all our heart. A half religion muſt always be

be a joyleſs thing. Perſons of this mixt character muſt in great meaſure be ſtrangers to pleaſure in any kind. They have juſt as much religion as maketh ſin bitter, and as much ſin as renders religion unpleaſant: and what an inſipid diſagreeable ſituation muſt this be! ——In reſpect of preſent enjoyment, the diſſolute and unreſerved ſlaves of the devil have manifeſtly the advantage of thoſe half-converted people. They get a full taſte, at leaſt, of ſuch dreggy pleaſure as ſin can afford; but the others cannot even get at that much, and at the ſame time their dry conſtrained formality ſupplies them with nothing to make up for the want of it. Whereas he who *followeth the Lord fully*, poſſeſſeth a joy infinitely ſuperior to what the creatures can yield; nay, a joy that is altogether independent on the creatures.

Moreover, religion, when it is genuine and cordial, heightens the reliſh of every lawful comfort. Beſides that natural ſweetneſs which God hath put into many of the outward benefits he beſtows, the true Chriſtian can look upon them as the gifts of a reconciled

reconciled Father, and pledges of better things to come. He can ſay upon the receipt of every mercy, — This is mine, and heaven alſo: — My God hath ſent me this token of his love, to ſupport and encourage me in my journey homeward; I ſhall ſoon be beyond the need of ſuch inferior bleſſings, and poſſeſs the living fountain from whence thoſe refreſhing ſtreams do flow. —— On the other hand, if his preſent allowance be ſcanty, he can ſay,— My Father knoweth what is good for me better than I do; bleſſed be his name, who, in kindneſs, with-holds from me what his wiſdom foreſees would prove a ſnare to my ſoul: He ſeeks my *whole* heart, and he is worthy to poſſeſs it: It is my buſineſs to *follow* him; and the leſs I am encumbered, the faſter I ſhall run: When I get home I ſhall be comforted and ſatisfied to the full: Famine may dwell in this wilderneſs, but is altogether unknown in that good land to which I am travelling: "In my Father's houſe there is bread "enough, and to ſpare." —— To a perſon of this temper nothing can come amiſs:

He knows that his lot is ordered by that God "who is wiſe in heart, and mighty "in ſtrength;" and who hath expreſsly promiſed, that "all things ſhall work to- "gether for good to them that love him, "to them who are the called according to "his purpoſe. —— Diſtreſs falls with a cruſhing and deadly weight upon the man who ſteps aſide from the road of duty; but he who keeps the ſtraight and onward path, can take adverſity by the cold hand, and welcome it as a friend, whoſe ſober advice will guide him in his pilgrimage far better than the flattering lips of proſ- perity. He can ſay with the Prophet Ha- bakkuk, when every earthly comfort takes wing and flieth away, "Although the fig- "tree ſhall not bloſſom, neither ſhall fruit "be in the vines, the labour of the olives "ſhall fail, and the fields ſhall yield no "meat, the flock ſhall be cut off from the "fold, and there ſhall be no herd in the "ſtalls: yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I "will joy in the God of my ſalvation."— But there are other motives beſides theſe, which ought to have weight, and which will

will have weight with every ingenuous heart. Let me therefore remind you, in the

3*d* place, That our Lord hath in ſome meaſure entruſted us with his glory, and called the world to take notice of us, as the perſons by whom he expects to be honoured.——O how ſhould this fire us with a generous ambition to excel in holineſs, that we may exhibit a juſt repreſentation of the Maſter we ſerve, and ſhow that he is in truth what the Scriptures report him to be, "altogether lovely," and "fairer "than the children of men!"——Is it not, my brethren, matter of grief to you, that ſo many are to be found who "deſpiſe "and reject the Saviour of mankind?" Would you not wiſh that all the world ſhould know his excellence, that they might admire, and love, and chooſe him for their Maſter?——If you do, for the Lord's ſake, for your own ſake, and for the ſake of the many thouſands to whom he ſtill appears "without form and come-"lineſs," do not with-hold the aid you can give: Him they cannot ſee, but you

are always in their eye; permit them to behold his image in you.——Would you not reckon it a high crime to blaſpheme him with your mouths? I know you would: O then do not blaſpheme and reproach him by your actions!——Allow me to aſk you,—When you go with the multitude, and live as careleſs ſinners do, trifling away your precious time in the giddy round of faſhionable amuſements; how would you have the world to judge? —Would you have them to believe, that ſuch behaviour is agreeable to the laws of your Maſter? that he approves of, or even that he is but ſlightly diſpleaſed with it? —— What would you think of a miniſter who ſhould preach in that manner, and labour to perſuade his hearers, that a careleſs trifling diſſipated life is perfectly conſiſtent with true piety, and that any thing beyond it is unneceſſary preciſeneſs, and being "righteous overmuch?"——Sure I am, you would look upon ſuch a miniſter with contempt, nay, with horror: and dare you practiſe what we dare not preach?— We may, we ought to ſay every thing that

that is true. We dare not preach an uncommanded ſtrictneſs; there is a curſe denounced againſt thoſe who "add unto "the words of this book," as well as againſt thoſe who "take from them." And if your behaviour differ widely from what we are bound to recommend, I again aſk the queſtion, What judgement would you have the world to form?—They muſt neceſſarily condemn either us or you; us for requiring too much, or you for performing too little:—They muſt either conclude that we miſrepreſent the religion of Jeſus, or that you are not the diſciples of Jeſus.——Will any of you be ſo candid as to take our part againſt yourſelves, and honeſtly confeſs, that you are wholly to blame? will you go to your carnal neighbours, and tell them, that what you do is utterly inconſiſtent with your holy profeſſion; that the Lord, whoſe name you bear, acted in a different manner himſelf, and gave you laws of a quite different nature and tendency?—I ſuſpect you will hardly conſent to this propoſal; and yet juſtice demands it; nay, unleſs you either do

ſomething of this kind, or alter your courſe of life, and *follow the Lord fully*, you are criminal in the higheſt degree; you ſlander your Maſter, you bear falſe witneſs againſt him, and are chargeable with diſhoneſty, with perjury, nay with blaſphemy itſelf.—And this ſuggeſts a

4th motive, which I beg you may attend to.—I am now going to plead with you from love to your neighbours. This is a principle you profeſs to honour; nay, if I miſtake not, the deſire of obliging others, and of rendering yourſelves agreeable to them, is your common apology for conforming to their manners, and avoiding the offenſive ſingularity of *following the Lord fully*. This, my brethren, is a falſe expreſſion of love; nevertheleſs, it diſcovers ſuch a regard to others, as furniſhes me with a handle to take hold of the true principle, and to plead it in ſupport of the duty I am recommending.—Surely it is no office of love to deceive another to his hurt, or to ſuffer him to continue in a pleaſing miſtake, which unavoidably muſt, and which may very ſpeedily end in his

his ruin: ſuch "tender mercies" would indeed be "cruelty." In the common affairs of life, this maxim is univerſally acknowledged: And is it leſs cruel to deceive your neighbour in matters of infinitely higher importance? If, by the freedoms you take, others are emboldened to ſin againſt God; will the pretence of good-nature or courteſy be ſuſtained as a defence againſt the charge of blood-guiltineſs? No, my brethren. They who are thus miſled by you "ſhall die in their iniquity;" but "their blood," at the ſame time, "ſhall be "required at your hands."—"Wo unto the "world becauſe of offences; but, wo chiefly "to him by whom the offence cometh." Hypocrites ſhall have the wo of everlaſting puniſhment, even the children of God ſhall have the wo of ſharp rebuke and chaſtiſement. It is dreadful to think that the ſouls of any ſhould periſh eternally, and we be the cauſe of it: ſurely "it were better "for that man, that a millſtone were hang-"ed about his neck, and that he were "drowned in the depth of the ſea."——Do you then love your neighbour in ſincerity?

O teach him by your example to *follow the Lord fully.* —— Remember " that he who " converteth a ſinner from the error of his " way, ſhall ſave a ſoul from death, and " ſhall hide a multitude of ſins;" and may hope to be crowned with diſtinguiſhed honours in that day, " when they that be " wiſe ſhall ſhine as the brightneſs of the " firmament, and they that *turn many to* " *righteouſneſs*, as the ſtars for ever and " ever."

The *5th* and *laſt* motive with which I ſhall preſs this important duty, is the reward that awaits thoſe who *follow the Lord fully.* They ſhall poſſeſs that good land of promiſe, whereof the earthly Canaan was only an emblem or type. " To them who " by patient continuance in well-doing, " ſeek for glory, honour, and immortali- " ty, Chriſt ſhall render eternal life."—— " Bleſſed are they that do his command- " ments, that they may have right to the " tree of life, and may enter in through " the gates into the city." There ſhall they ſee Abraham, and Iſaac, and Jacob, who ſhine with ſuch luſtre in the ſacred records;

records; there ſhall they ſee Moſes, and Aaron, and Caleb, and Joſhua, with all the holy prophets and apoſtles of our Lord.—Nay, in heaven they ſhall behold, and delightfully converſe with, "Jeſus the Me-"diator of the new covenant," who, with the price of his own blood, obtained for them a right to that undefiled inheritance, and ſent forth his Spirit to prepare them for the enjoyment of it.——And ſhall not the proſpect of ſuch exalted felicity, animate us in our Chriſtian courſe, and powerfully incite us to "be followers of them "who through faith and patience inherit "the promiſes?——Can we ſuppoſe that any of the ſaints who ſurround the throne of God, do now repent of their ſelf-denial and mortification, or repine becauſe they were deſpiſed and perſecuted while on earth? No, my friends;——they would not part with the feebleſt ray of their preſent glory, for the everlaſting poſſeſſion of all the honours and pleaſures that this earth can afford.——What ſhall I ſay more?——I have urged the moſt weighty motives that occurred to me; and could I think

think of any thing ſtill more perſuaſive, I ſhould add it with pleaſure. But without the divine bleſſing, no arguments will prevail. All therefore that remains is, to turn my pleadings with you into prayers to God, that he may beſtow upon you *another ſpirit*, and enable you by his grace *ſo to follow him* while here, that hereafter, in the heavenly world, you may *fully* enjoy him, through all the growing ages of a happy eternity. *Amen.*

SER-

SERMON XVII.

PSALM xxxix. 12.

——*For I am a ſtranger with thee, and a ſojourner, as all my fathers were.*

HAD theſe words been ſpoken by one of the Rechabites, who were commanded by their father Jonadab, "That they "ſhould drink no wine, neither build houſes, "nor ſow ſeed, nor plant vineyards, nor "have any; but that they ſhould dwell in "tents all their days," we might perhaps have conſidered them as pointing merely at the *peculiarities* of that ſequeſtered tribe, by which they were diſtinguiſhed from the reſt of mankind: but as they are the words of David, who himſelf was a king, one of the lords of this earth, who had every inducement to magnify his office, and to make his importance appear in its utmoſt extent, they can lie under no ſuſpicion of partiality; and therefore challenge the greateſt regard.

It

It muſt indeed be acknowledged, that David wrote this Pſalm under the heavy preſſure of affliction; which may induce ſome to think, that what he ſaith in my text, is no other than the natural language of a diſpirited man, whoſe mind was unhinged and broken by adverſity: but if we attend to what is written, 1 *Chron.* xxix. 15. we ſhall find him uſing the ſame language in the height of his proſperity: "We are "ſtrangers," ſaid he, "before thee, and ſo-"journers, as were all our fathers; our "days on earth are as a ſhadow, and there "is none abiding." Never did the Jewiſh nation appear to be more at home than at that time: As for David, his happineſs was ſo complete, that, inſtead of aſking any additional favours, he could hardly find words to expreſs his gratitude for thoſe he had already received. Yet, amidſt all his affluence, when he poſſeſſed every outward comfort his heart could wiſh, ſtill he called himſelf a *ſtranger* and a *ſojourner* before God.

We muſt therefore conſider the words of my text, as expreſſing the fixt and habitual ſentiments

ſentiments of David's heart. In his moſt proſperous condition, he did not look upon this earth as his home; but extended his views to the heavenly world, that glorious and permanent inheritance of the ſaints, which is "incorruptible and undefiled, and "which fadeth not away."

Among the various ſubjects of inquiry that might readily occur to us upon reading this paſſage, the two following appear to me the moſt intereſting and profitable.

Firſt, Whence is it that holy men conſider themſelves as *ſtrangers and ſojourners* upon earth? And,

Secondly, What manner of life is moſt expreſſive of this character, and beſt ſuited to the condition of *ſtrangers and ſojourners?* To theſe, therefore, I ſhall confine myſelf in the following diſcourſe.

I begin with inquiring, Whence it is that holy men, while they live upon earth, conſider themſelves as *ſtrangers and ſojourners with God?*——And to account for this, one might declaim at great length upon the unſatisfying nature, and precarious duration, of

of every thing below the ſun. I might remind you, that as we came but lately into this world, ſo we muſt ſhortly go out of it, and leave all our poſſeſſions to be enjoyed by others; who, in their turn, likewiſe ſhall die, and part with them. I might deſcend to the various calamities that embitter human life, from which none of mankind are altogether exempted; and to theſe I might add the peculiar ſufferings of the righteous, thoſe ſharp and painful trials to which the beſt of men are moſt frequently expoſed in this ſtate of diſcipline. But I am unwilling to enlarge upon topics of this nature; becauſe I would not have it thought, that the godly conſider themſelves as *ſtrangers and ſojourners*, ſolely, or even principally, for ſuch reaſons as theſe. They renounce the world, not becauſe it is unfriendly to them, but becauſe it is unſuitable: they would deſpiſe its ſmiles no leſs than its frowns; they are not violently thruſt out of it, but voluntarily reſign it, and leave it to thoſe who have nothing elſe for their portion.—Accordingly, you may obſerve, that David ſtyles himſelf not only a *ſtranger*, but a *ſojourner*.

journer.——Every man is a ſtranger, who is not a native of the place where he reſides: but a *ſojourner* is one who maketh only a paſſing viſit to a place, with a reſolution to leave it again, and to proceed on his journey. Now, this laſt is the diſtinguiſhing character of the ſaints. —— Wicked men muſt leave this earth, they know they muſt, and wiſh it were otherwiſe with all their heart; and as they have no proſpect of going to a better world, they do all they can to baniſh the thoughts of their removal from this, that they may reliſh their preſent enjoyments with as little alloy as poſſible. Whereas the godly, who are made citizens of the heavenly Jeruſalem, can look forward without diſmay to the time of their departure from this "ſtrange land," "know-"ing, that when the earthly houſe of this "tabernacle ſhall be diſſolved, they have a "building of God, an houſe not made with "hands, eternal in the heavens." They would not chooſe to live here always; they are *ſtrangers* in affection, as well as in condition; their hearts are elſewhere; they

deſire,

desire, they even long to be at home with God.

The saints justly account themselves *strangers* upon earth, because they are regenerated by the Spirit of God; they are "born from above," and therefore can find no place of rest while they live at a distance from their native country. Every thing tends naturally to the place of its original; and grace, which came down from heaven, leads the soul upward to heaven from whence it came. "Whatsoever is born of "God," saith the Apostle John, "overcometh the world." The dry and empty husks of earthly enjoyments, cannot satisfy the desires of a heaven-born spirit: upon these the renewed man looks down with a holy disdain, and then lifts his longing eyes to that celestial country, where "is fulness "of joy, and pleasures for evermore."—— There he knows his inheritance lies;—there dwell his kindred, to whom he stands in the dearest and most intimate relation; "God the Judge of all, Jesus the Mediator "of the new covenant, an innumerable "company of angels, and the spirits of just

"men

" men made perfect."——And there alſo he is to make his everlaſting abode. Here he ſojourns for a while, till he is rendered meet for entering into " the purchaſed poſ- " ſeſſion;" and when the appointed ſeaſon comes, he gladly removes to his Father's houſe, to dwell with his God for ever and ever.

Upon theſe accounts, my brethren, the children of God, while they live upon earth, conſider themſelves as *ſojourners* in a ſtrange land. Their ſentiments in this matter are not the effects of diſappointment and vexation, but the concluſions of an enlightened and renewed mind: they are willing to leave this world, becauſe they have a home to go to, where their natures ſhall be perfected, and all their deſires ſatisfied to the full.—Let us now inquire, in the

Second place, What manner of behaviour is moſt expreſſive of this temper, and beſt ſuited to the condition of *ſtrangers and ſojourners?*—This branch of the ſubject opens a wide field of practical inſtruction, and will lead me to recommend to you ſome of

the moſt important and difficult duties of the Chriſtian life.

1ſt, If we look upon this earth as a ſtrange country, through which we are only paſſing to our native home, it ought certainly to be our care, that we receive as little hurt in our paſſage as poſſible. This is a maxim of common prudence that no body will diſpute. Now the greateſt hurt the world can do us, is to make us forget the place of our deſtination, or loiter too much by the way: and therefore its ſmiles are more to be dreaded than its frowns. "The proſperity "of fools," ſaith Solomon, "deſtroyeth "them." It is difficult to poſſeſs much, and not to overlove it: Hence that caution of the Pſalmiſt, "If riches increaſe, ſet not "your heart upon them." When our ſituation is ſo agreeable, that we find ourſelves diſpoſed to ſay, "Soul, take thine eaſe;" then indeed it is high time to look warily around us; the hook is not ſo curiouſly baited for no end. —— I do not mean to diſparage the bounty of Providence; if it hath pleaſed God to diſtinguiſh any of you by riches or honours; or to crown your

honeſt

honeſt induſtry with uncommon affluence; it is certainly your duty to be thankful to that kind Benefactor, who "hath covered "your table, and made your cup to run "over." I only mean to execute that order which was given to Timothy, "Charge "them that are rich in this world, that "they be not high-minded, nor truſt in "uncertain riches, but in the living God, "who giveth us richly all things to enjoy." I would only exhort you as Paul did the Corinthians, "To rejoice as though you "rejoiced not; to buy as though you poſ- "ſeſſed not; and to uſe this world, ſo as not "to abuſe it; becauſe the time is ſhort, and "the faſhion of this world paſſeth away." My ſole aim is to remind you, that the more you have, the greater need there will be to keep a ſtrict and jealous guard upon your hearts, leſt they be debauched by thoſe pleaſing enjoyments, and alienated from God, who alone hath a right to them. —But it is not enough that we receive no hurt in our journey through this ſtrange land; it ought likewiſe to be our care, in the

2*d* place, To make all the provision we can for that better country to which we are travelling.—The Holy Scriptures speak of "a meetness for the inheritance of the "saints in light;"—of "making to our-"selves friends of the mammon of unright-"eousness;"—of "providing bags which "wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that "faileth not."—In opposition to all this, we read of some, "who make provision "for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof;" —"whose God is their belly, and whose "glory is in their shame, who mind "earthly things."——I need not inform you, which of these two are the *strangers and sojourners*. Let it be our care, my brethren, who claim this character, "to grow "in grace," and to bring forth "those "fruits of righteousness, which are, by "Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise "of God." Every advance in holiness is a step that leadeth upward to the heavenly felicity: for what is glory but grace in maturity? they differ only in degree; they are the same in kind, and the one grows up and ripens into the other. Our riches

and

and honours, though they ſhould accompany us to the laſt period of life, muſt leave us at death: "Naked we came into "the world, and naked we muſt return:" but holineſs ſhall paſs with us beyond the grave, and attend us home to our Father's houſe, there to ſhine with increaſing brightneſs through all the ages of eternity.—— Do we then aſpire to the heavenly ſtate? let us endeavour to enjoy as much of heaven as we can, even while we *ſojourn* in this "houſe of our pilgrimage." Surely "every man that hath this hope in him," —the hope of being thoroughly changed into the "likeneſs of his Lord, when he "ſhall ſee him as he is," at his ſecond appearance,—muſt, by this hope, be excited to purify "himſelf even as he is pure." Let us then hearken to that affectionate exhortation of the Apoſtle Peter, "Dearly "beloved, I beſeech you as *ſtrangers* and "*pilgrims*, abſtain from fleſhly luſts, which "war againſt the ſoul."——Let us "add "to our faith, virtue; and to virtue, "knowledge; and to knowledge, tem-"perance; and to temperance, patience;

" and to patience, godlineſs; and to god-
" lineſs, brotherly kindneſs; and to bro-
" therly kindneſs, charity. —— For ſo an
" entrance ſhall be miniſtered unto us
" abundantly, into the everlaſting king-
" dom of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus
" Chriſt."

3*dly*, It becomes *ſtrangers and ſojourners* to endure with patience and fortitude any hardſhips they may meet with on their journey homeward.———We ought, indeed, my brethren, to lay our account with inconveniences by the way: our Maſter, who " was a man of ſorrows," hath told us expreſsly, that " in the world we " ſhall have tribulation." — " Ye know," ſaid he, " that the world hated me, be-
" fore it hated you. If ye were of the
" world, the world would love his own;
" but becauſe ye are not of the world, but
" I have choſen you out of the world,
" therefore the world hateth you."—Yet however painful thoſe ſufferings may be, the proſpect of the joy that awaiteth us, is more than ſufficient to ſupport us under them; eſpecially when it is conſider-

ed,

ed, that the afflictions of this preſent life, if wiſely improved, ſhall exalt us to higher dignity in the kingdom of our Father. It is recorded of the primitive Chriſtians, that "they took joyfully the ſpoiling of "their goods," becauſe "they knew in "themſelves, that they had in heaven a "better and an enduring ſubſtance." —— "They were troubled on every ſide, yet "not diſtreſſed; perplexed, but not in de- "ſpair; perſecuted, but not forſaken; caſt "down, but not deſtroyed;" as we read, 2 *Cor.* iv. 8, 9. And if any ſhall inquire, what it was that rendered them ſuperior to theſe trials, they may be fully informed by St Paul himſelf in the cloſe of that chapter, where he ſaith, "For this cauſe we faint "not, but though our outward man periſh, "yet the inward man is renewed day by "day. For our light affliction, which is "but for a moment, worketh for us a far "more exceeding and eternal weight of "glory; while we look not at the things "which are ſeen, and are temporal, but at "thoſe things which are not ſeen, and are "eternal."

4thly, If we view heaven as the place of our everlaſting abode, we ſhall, above all things, be ſolicitous to be thoroughly acquainted with the way that leads to it. David prayed with the utmoſt propriety, when he thus expreſſed himſelf, *Pſalm* cxix. 19. "I am a ſtranger in the earth, "hide not thy commandments from me." He knew that "the word of God was a "lamp to his feet and a light unto his "path;" he therefore "hid it in his "heart," as the moſt ineſtimable treaſure he could poſſeſs, and made it the ſubject of his conſtant delightful meditation: "Thy teſtimonies," ſaid he, "are "my delight, and my counſellors;" — and "thy ſtatutes have been my ſongs in "the houſe of my pilgrimage." —— I do not deny that reaſon, even in its preſent dark and corrupt ſtate, may, in many important inſtances, lead a ſober inquirer to the knowledge of his duty; but, alas! in a great variety of caſes, he would find himſelf utterly at a loſs, not knowing which road to take: for though reaſon, unaſſiſted,

unaſſiſted, may ſtill be able to trace out the capital lines of ſin and duty, yet the confines of each, the preciſe boundaries which divide the lawful from the forbidden ground, require a more penetrating eye to diſcern them. But in the Holy Scriptures theſe are plainly marked out to us by the finger of God, who cannot err. The ten laws publiſhed from Sinai, which were afterwards explained and amplified by our Saviour in his ſermon upon the mount, furniſh us with a complete and unerring rule of life, and deſcribe that "high way of holineſs," in which we may walk without fear or diffidence. We need not perplex ourſelves with the doubtful reaſonings of our own minds; we may find an eaſy ſolution of all our difficulties in that written "law and teſti-"mony," according to which we ſhall be finally judged: for "the teſtimony of "the Lord is ſure, making wiſe the "ſimple:"—"the judgements of the Lord "are true and righteous altogether."—— Such is the guide which God hath provided for directing his *pilgrims* in their way homeward:

homeward: and if we are poſſeſſed of the temper of pilgrims, "we ſhall eſteem the "words of God's mouth more than our "neceſſary food;" and ſay concerning them, "More to be deſired are they than "gold, yea than much fine gold; ſweeter "alſo than honey, and the honey-comb. "Moreover by them is thy ſervant warned; "and in keeping of them there is great re-"ward."

5*thly*, If we conſider ourſelves as *ſtrangers and ſojourners* here below, we ought certainly to behave like thoſe who belong to a better country, and to ſhow by our conduct, that we have a nobler birth and higher hopes than worldly men have. — God frequently complained of his ancient people, that by the wickedneſs of their lives, they had cauſed "his holy name to be profaned "among the heathen." They who love their country, will be jealous of its credit in foreign parts, and carefully avoid every thing that hath a tendency to bring upon it the leaſt ſtain or reproach. Accordingly, we are exhorted in Scripture, to "adorn "the doctrine of God our Saviour in all "things:"

" things:"—" to walk circumſpectly, not " as fools, but as wiſe;"—and particularly, " to walk in wiſdom towards them that are " without."——Indeed, as I formerly obſerved, our firſt care ſhould be, that we ourſelves receive no hurt; but I muſt now remind you, that ſomething more is incumbent upon us than regard to our own ſafety: We ought not only to avoid or reſiſt temptations to ſin, but alſo to ſhine in all the virtues of a holy life, that by the light of our good works, others may be excited to glorify our Father who is in heaven. We have two things that ſhould engage our attention; *firſt*, our own welfare; and *next*, the credit and honour of that religion we profeſs: And he is too ſelfiſh to be a good Chriſtian, who minds only the one, and overlooks the other.—Wide, my brethren, is the compaſs of our duty: the ſpiritual *ſojourner* hath many parts to perform; he muſt not ſatisfy himſelf with a retired and private virtue, but is bound by the ſtricteſt ties of gratitude, " to ſhow forth the praiſes " of that God, who hath called him out of " darkneſs, into his marvellous light."——

Every

Every ſtep of our conduct is of the greateſt importance, not to ourſelves only, but to others alſo: and therefore we ought to move with caution and accuracy. It is not enough that we "ceaſe to do evil;" we muſt likewiſe "learn to do well:" Nor ſhould we even think it enough, to do what is ſimply good; we ſhould aim at that good which is moſt ſeaſonable and excellent. In fine, to live as becometh true pilgrims, is to walk with our rule continually in our eye, and never knowingly to deviate from it, either to the right hand or to the left: It is to ponder every ſtep we take; to weigh every undertaking, with all its circumſtances, in the balance of the ſanctuary: It is to conſider the conſequences of our behaviour with regard to others; to have our whole converſation, our words and our actions, "ſeaſoned with ſalt;" as the Apoſtle hath expreſſed it; that is, not only innocent in themſelves, but, as much as may be, edifying alſo, that they may miniſter grace to thoſe who hear, or behold us.

There is an affected ſingularity, which is conceited and diſobliging, and does real diſhonour

diſhonour to religion, repreſenting it as childiſh, trifling, and capricious: on the other hand, there is a ſervile compliance with the maxims and faſhions of the world, which is mean and puſillanimous, and repreſents religion as variable, timid, and irreſolute: Betwixt theſe two extremes lies a middle plan of conduct, which expreſſeth the true genius of Chriſtianity, repreſenting it as generous, intrepid, and diſintereſted: —When we dare avow the ſentiments of our hearts, and obey the dictates of conſcience, and the laws of our God, in the face of the ſun; when our whole behaviour is conſiſtent and uniform, and ſhows that we have no other aim, but to promote the honour of our heavenly Father, and to obtain his approbation: Then we act up to the dignity of our Chriſtian character; then we live as *ſtrangers and ſojourners* upon earth.

There is one thing in particular I would recommend to you as peculiarly ſuited to the condition of pilgrims; and that is a decent ſobriety of manners, a grave and ſerious deportment, in oppoſition to what the Scriptures call a "vain converſation."

—I

—I do not mean that you ſhould be ſad and dejected; bleſſed be God, the Chriſtian hath a more extenſive field of pleaſure before him, than fancy itſelf can repreſent to the ſenſual mind. The ſerioufneſs to which I am preſſing you is not oppoſed to joy, but to levity: I call you to delights that are pure, ſincere, and inward, in oppoſition to "the laughter of the fool, "and that deluſive mirth that ends in "heavineſs." I would only have you to ſhow, that you find a *preſent* reward in the ſervice of God, and that the joys of religion are of too ſublime a quality to mix and incorporate with the dead and polluted pleaſures of ſenſe: I would have you to behave with that ſpirit which becomes your high birth; like perſons who know that God is their father, that Chriſt is their elder brother, and the Holy Spirit their comforter and guide. In ſhort, I would have you to act like citizens of heaven, who are only paſſing through this earth, and have little more concern in it than to eſcape its pollutions, by keeping the ſtrait and narrow road that leads to the

the promiſed land of reſt.——Why ſhould you borrow, nay, why ſhould you ſeem to borrow, water from the "broken" and dirty "ciſterns" of the ſenſualiſt, who have acceſs to "the fountain of living waters?" —Is it not your duty, is it not your honour, to ſhow the world, that no part of your happineſs depends upon ſuch low gratifications; that you find enough in God to quench your thirſt, and to ſatisfy the moſt unbounded deſires of your ſoul?—— This, my brethren, is the way, the only way, to awaken the attention of ſecure beſotted ſinners. Let them ſee what true godlineſs can do by itſelf; and this may beget in them a conviction of its worth and excellence. But how ſhall they diſcover that religion hath any peculiar virtue to ſtrengthen and comfort the ſoul, ſo long as they can obſerve thoſe who profeſs it, walking in the ſame road, and frequenting the ſame haunts of vanity with themſelves?——There is a majeſty in ſtrict and ſerious godlineſs, that commands eſteem and reverence even from the worſt of men: But when religion aſſumes the habit and complexion

complexion of the world, when it is blended with the fashionable follies of the age, it usually makes such a clumsy figure, such a motley appearance, that it becomes more ridiculous and contemptible than pure unmixt folly itself. "Wherefore come out "from among them, and be ye separate, "saith the Lord, and touch not the un-"clean thing; and I will receive you, and "be a father unto you, and ye shall be my "sons and daughters, saith the Lord Al-"mighty." Once more, in the

6*th* place, If indeed we have turned our back upon this world, and are travelling to a better country, let us help one another by the way, and carry as many home with us as we can. Do we meet with any who are feeble and dejected? let us do every thing in our power to strengthen and encourage them.—— Are any doubtful and hesitating about the right path? let us give them our best advice; and, according to our ability, show them the way wherein they ought to go.——Are any discouraged by the opposition they meet with, or the dangers they fear? let us take the road before

fore them, and animate them to follow our example.——Do we ſee any ſtopping ſhort, or even looking aſide to ſome alluring objects, that have a tendency to withdraw their hearts from God? let us, in the ſpirit of meekneſs, reprove and admoniſh them. ——Above all, let us beware of falling out with our fellow-travellers; for that muſt neceſſarily mar the progreſs of both: if they and we are going to the ſame place, let that ſuffice to unite us in affection; and let it be agreed, that we may differ in leſſer things.

But many, alas! take the oppoſite road, and walk in "the broad way that leadeth "to deſtruction." How ſhall we behave with reſpect to theſe?——Let us remember, my friends, that they are ſtill our brethren, and that the time was, when we ourſelves were "fooliſh and diſobedient," even as they are.——Should we meet with one of our countrymen in a foreign land, living in a poor and abject condition, and at the ſame time knew that he was heir to a plentiful eſtate at home, would we not endeavour to make him ſenſible of his folly? would we not uſe every argument to perſuade him

to return with us?—Why, this is the very caſe.——We ſee immortal creatures forgetting themſelves, and the great things they may poſſeſs in the heavenly world, pleaſed and deluded with the verieſt trifles, with lying vanities that periſh in the uſing: They are really our brethren; and there is enough in our Father's houſe both for them and us. ——Indeed, if the proviſion were ſcanty, we might have ſome colour of excuſe for leaving them behind us; but the heavenly inheritance is ſufficient for us all; nay, the number of co-heirs, inſtead of diminiſhing, increaſeth the happineſs of each individual.

We had all wandered into "a far coun-"try," when our compaſſionate Father ſent his *beloved Son* to invite us home: And if any of us have got our minds enlightened; if by grace we have been awakened from our fatal lethargy, and determined to comply with the kind invitation; ſhall we not do what in us lies, to awaken thoſe who are ſtill aſleep? ſhall we not tell them the good news, and preſs them to go with us?——Oh! it is terrible to think of an everlaſting ſeparation. Place yourſelves before

fore the judgement-ſeat, and think how affecting that awful moment ſhall be, when the Judge ſhall pronounce the final doom, and ſend away from his preſence ſome of thoſe with whom we once were acquainted, perhaps intimately connected, nay, whom we dearly loved; ſend them, I ſay, from his preſence to the other ſide of that unpaſſable gulf, from whence they ſhall never return!———How that final parting ſhall then be felt by us, I know not; but ſurely the diſtant proſpect of it is dreadful in the mean time. O then let us do what we can to prevent it! Let us imitate that *good Shepherd* "who came to ſeek and to "ſave that which was loſt:" *He* "gave "his life for the ſheep;" and ſhall any who have taſted the ſweetneſs of his mercy, think it much to follow with their warmeſt intreaties, thoſe unhappy wanderers, who, as they themſelves once did, have left the good paſture, and continue to ſtray in the barren wilderneſs, where, without ſpeedy relief, they muſt irrecoverably periſh?——God forbid:—Let us have pity upon thoſe who have not yet learnt to

pity themſelves; and to the moſt vigorous efforts we can uſe for their recovery, let us add our fervent prayers to God, that he may ſend forth his Spirit, to bring them into the way of peace and ſafety, and then to keep and guide them in that way, till he lead them at length into "the land of up-"rightneſs."

THUS have I endeavoured to ſhow, in a variety of inſtances, what manner of life is moſt expreſſive of the temper, and beſt ſuited to the condition, of *ſtrangers and ſojourners*. May God accompany what hath been ſaid with his effectual bleſſing, and enable us all ſo to behave in this "houſe of "our pilgrimage," that when we ſhall have done with earthly things, we may be received into thoſe "everlaſting habitations, whi-"ther Chriſt hath gone to prepare a place "for us." To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, the one living and true God, be aſcribed, as is moſt due, all bleſſing, and honour, and glory, and power, both now and evermore. *Amen.*

SER-

SERMON XVIII.

Preached on the day of National Thankſgiving, Nov. 29. 1759.

JOSHUA xxiii. 11.

Take good heed therefore unto yourſelves, that ye love the Lord your God.

THESE are the words of a ſoldier and a ſaint; a ſoldier, equally brave and ſucceſsful; a ſaint, diſtinguiſhed by the teſtimony of God himſelf. They are the words of Joſhua, the victorious leader of God's ancient people, and make a part of that ſolemn valedictory ſpeech, which he pronounced in a national aſſembly of his countrymen a little before his death.

The ſame happy union of fortitude and piety which had rendered his active life ſo glorious, ſtill ſhone forth with undiminiſhed ſtrength, to adorn the concluding ſcene. Never did the magnanimity of the ſoldier, never did the piety of the ſaint,

never did the generous zeal of the patriot, appear with more becoming grace and dignity, than when this great and good man roſe up in the preſence of all his brethren, and thus addreſſed the tribes of Iſrael:

" I am old and ſtricken in age; and ye " have ſeen all that the Lord your God hath " done unto all theſe nations, becauſe of " you; for the Lord your God is he that " hath fought for you. Behold, I have " divided unto you by lot theſe nations " that remain, to be an inheritance for your " tribes, from Jordan, with all the nations " that I have cut off, even unto the great " ſea weſtward. And the Lord your God, " he ſhall expel them from before you, and " drive them from out of your ſight, and " ye ſhall poſſeſs their land, as the Lord " your God hath promiſed unto you. Be " ye therefore very courageous, to keep and " to do all that is written in the book of " the law of Moſes, that ye turn not aſide " therefrom, to the right hand or to the " left; that ye come not among theſe nations, theſe that remain amongſt you, nei-

" ther

" ther make mention of the name of their " gods, nor cauſe to ſwear by them, neither " ſerve them, nor bow yourſelves unto them: " but cleave unto the Lord your God, as ye " have done unto this day. For the Lord " hath driven out from before you, great " nations and ſtrong; but as for you, no " man hath been able to ſtand before you " unto this day. One man of you ſhall " chaſe a thouſand; for the Lord your God, " he it is that fighteth for you, as he hath " promiſed you. *Take good heed therefore* " *unto yourſelves, that ye love the Lord your* " *God.*"

" How forcible are right words!" Well did Solomon ſay, that " the tongue of the " wiſe is health," and " a word fitly ſpoken, " like apples of gold in pictures of ſilver." An addreſs more worthy of the ſpeaker, or better adapted to thoſe who heard it, cannot be deviſed, than that which theſe verſes preſent to our view. The Jews were at this time in full poſſeſſion of the promiſed land; every man dwelt ſafely under his vine, and under his fig-tree; neither was there any to make them afraid; for " the Lord had

" given them reſt from all their enemies " round about." By a train of the moſt aſtoniſhing victories, they had totally ſubdued the nations of Canaan, whoſe country they divided by lot among themſelves. Such a valuable conqueſt, equally complete and glorious, afforded matter of joy and triumph to them all; but chiefly to Joſhua, who conducted their arms, and to whoſe wiſdom and valour, as the means under God, they were viſibly indebted for all their ſucceſs.

Here then was a theatre, on which ambition and vain-glory might have acted their parts to great advantage; nay, they might have done it almoſt without fear of detection or reproof. No claim of merit would have been thought exceſſive, no applauſe too high, no reward too great, for ſuch an illuſtrious hero as Joſhua; and had his ſpeech been artfully framed to exalt *himſelf*, the effect of it would probably have been ſimilar to that of Herod's oration, when " the people gave a ſhout, ſaying, " It is the voice of a God, and not of a " man."

But

But Joſhua poſſeſſed "another ſpirit." Long had he been dead to pride and ſelf-intereſt: He ſought not his own praiſe, but the honour of his God, and the proſperity of his brethren.——He reminds them, indeed, that he had often led them to victory and triumph; but with the ſame breath he reminds them alſo, that "it was the Lord "their God that fought for them."——— "They got not the land by their own ſword, "neither did their own bow ſave them, "but the right hand and arm of Almighty "Jehovah." To him therefore the ſole tribute of praiſe was due: This was the important truth which Joſhua chiefly recommended to the attention of his hearers. And now knowing that the time of his departure was at hand, as the laſt and ſtrongeſt proof of his affection and care,—with the authority of a governor he commands,—with the bowels of a father he intreats,—and with all the ſerioufneſs of a dying ſaint, he obteſts them, *to love the Lord their God.*

This, my brethren, is the charge which the beſt of KINGS, our truly magnanimous and

and moſt gracious SOVEREIGN, doth this day addreſs to us.—He hath called us together by his royal proclamation, to return public thanks to Almighty God, for the variety of great and public bleſſings, which have enriched and diſtinguiſhed this memorable year.——The preceding year was indeed glorious; but of this it may be ſaid, with a peculiar emphaſis, that it excels in glory. Even to the preſent day, the ſeries of victory remains unbroken; no defeat hath ſtained our national honour, nor any public diſaſter interrupted our joy. Hitherto our ſunſhine hath been clear and unclouded: Amidſt the tumults and horrors of ſurrounding war, bleſſed with uncommon plenty at home, we enjoy all the comforts of domeſtic peace; whilſt every quarter of the world hath beheld our triumphs, and on every element, by ſea and by land, ſucceſs hath crowned the Britiſh arms.——Succeſs, I ſay, of the beſt and moſt valuable kind; for the fruits of our victories are not the romantic and airy additions of military fame, but advantages of a ſubſtantial and more enduring nature:—the increaſe of our

naval

naval ſtrength, which experience hath ſhown to be the ſureſt means of our defence;—the enlargement of our commerce, the great ſource of our wealth;—the protection of our King's electoral dominions, unjuſtly invaded on our account;—and the ſecurity of our colonies from the inroads and devaſtations of mercileſs *ſavages*, rendered ſtill more ſavage by the inſtigation and example of perfidious Frenchmen. ——— Theſe are laurels which wither not; acquiſitions of real and permanent worth, which, with humble boldneſs, we may publiſh to the world, and even avow to our own hearts, as becoming grounds of thankſgiving to that God, "who is righteous in all his ways, "and holy in all his works; who executeth "judgement for the oppreſſed, but the "way of the wicked he turneth upſide "down."

This King of heaven, "who abaſeth "thoſe that walk in pride;—all whoſe works "are truth, and his ways judgement," we praiſe, extol, and honour this day, as the author of theſe ſignal and unmerited bleſſings. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto "us:"

" us:"—not unto the wiſdom of our counſellors, not unto the valour of our troops, though both have equalled our wiſhes, and even exceeded our hopes; — yet not unto theſe,—but " unto the name of God," is all " the glory" due.——He it was who taught our ſenators wiſdom; He it was who girded our ſoldiers with ſtrength; it was the Lord our God who fought for us in every ſucceſsful enterpriſe; who in *Germany* and *Canada* revealed His mighty arm on our ſide; who hath thus far proſpered our righteous cauſe, and made us to triumph over them that hate us.

Juſtly may we ſay with the church of old, " O ſing unto the Lord a new ſong, for he " hath done marvellous things; his right " hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him " the victory. The Lord hath made known " his ſalvation, his righteouſneſs hath he " openly ſhewed in the ſight of the Hea- " then: he hath remembered mercy to- " wards" BRITAIN; " all the ends of the " earth have ſeen the ſalvation of our " God."

But, my brethren, thankſgiving and praiſe

are

are only a part of the tribute we owe. Joſhua made a farther demand upon his countrymen. And as our ſituation, in ſome of its moſt important circumſtances, is apparently ſimilar to theirs; the ſame charge that was given to them, with the utmoſt propriety, may be addreſſed to us:

Take good heed therefore unto yourſelves, that ye love the Lord your God. For,

In the *firſt* place, It is for this very end that national mercies are beſtowed.——— "Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with "all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul," is the firſt and great commandment in the law; and Providence enforceth what the law demands. God ſpeaks to us by his works, as well as by his word; both are his meſſengers: and it often happens, that the ſigns of the one are as expreſſive and intelligible as the language of the other. Hence a voice is aſcribed to the rod by the Prophet Micah, (*Micah* vi. 9.) "The Lord's voice crieth "unto the city, and the man of wiſdom "ſhall ſee thy name: HEAR YE THE ROD, "and who hath appointed it." Judgement

is

is that ſtern meſſenger which ſpeaks to us out of the whirlwind, ſaying, " Why ſhould " ye be ſtricken any more? Will ye revolt " ſtill more and more?"—But mercy hath a ſofter voice; in mildeſt accents it courts our return, and with perſuaſive eloquence diſarms our enmity, bends the ſtubborn will, and captivates the heart.——" When our " own wickedneſs corrects us, and our " backſlidings reprove us," then it is expected that we ſhould " know and ſee what " an evil and bitter thing it is to ſin againſt " God:" After this manner do his judgements teach men righteouſneſs. But his mercies have a higher office; to them it belongs to teach men love; they repreſent God as truly amiable, as the moſt worthy object of our ſupreme affection.——Signal and unmerited favours, eſpecially when conferred upon thoſe who are not only unworthy of them, but who deſerve the contrary, are juſtly compared to " coals of fire," which melt down every thing but droſs. Even the malice of Saul was ſo far overcome by the generoſity of David, that " he " lifted up his voice and wept, and ſaid un-

" to

" to David, Thou art more righteous than " I; for thou haſt rewarded me good, " whereas I have rewarded thee evil." Now of this kind are all God's favours towards us. And ſhall favours of ſuch a nature be heaped upon us in vain? Surely, when he whom we had offended, moſt baſely offended, is not only merciful, but bounteous alſo; when he not only ſpares us, but even loads us with benefits; our hearts muſt be impenetrable, and void of all feeling, if they are not ſubdued to the love, as well as the admiration, of ſuch amazing generoſity. ——We have been praiſing God for his goodneſs; but praiſe without love can never aſcend to his throne with acceptance.—Let us therefore *take good heed unto ourſelves, that we love the Lord our God;* and the rather becauſe,

In the *ſecond* place, We are in danger of perverting his goodneſs to a very different purpoſe. The caution given in the text, plainly implies this; and the ſubſequent hiſtory of the Jewiſh nation as plainly proves, that the caution was neceſſary.

We

We read in the book of Judges, that after the death of Joſhua, "there aroſe another generation, which knew not the "Lord, and they forſook the God of their "fathers, which brought them out of the "land of Egypt, and ſerved other gods." This monſtrous ingratitude Moſes had ſuſpected, and left many warnings on record to guard them againſt it.——"It ſhall be," ſaid he in one place, "when the Lord thy "God ſhall have brought thee into the land "which he ſware unto thy fathers, to "Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, to give thee, "great and goodly cities which thou build-"edſt not, and houſes full of all good things "which thou filledſt not, and wells which "thou diggedſt not, and vineyards and "olive-trees which thou plantedſt not; "when thou ſhalt have eaten, and art full, "then beware that thou forget not the Lord "thy God, which brought thee forth out of "the land of Egypt, and from the houſe of "bondage." And in another place, after recounting many temporal bleſſings which God had promiſed to beſtow upon them, he thus concludes: "Take heed to your-

"ſelves,

"ſelves, that your heart be not deceived, "and ye turn aſide, and ſerve other gods, "and worſhip them." —— "But Jeſhurun "waxed fat, and kicked, and lightly eſteem-"ed the rock of his ſalvation." Iſrael, that was humble in the wilderneſs, tame and tractable in thoſe lean paſtures, grew proud and wanton in fruitful Canaan. When "they ſucked honey out of the rock," as the Prophet expreſſes it, "and did eat the "fat of lambs, and kidneys of wheat, then, "ſaid they, We are lords, we will come no "more unto thee."

That proſperity ſhould have another and very different effect upon us, I have already endeavoured to ſhow; and, bleſſed be God, examples of a wiſe and laudable improvement of proſperity are not altogether wanting. It is recorded to the honour of good King Jehoſhaphat, 2 *Chron.* xvii. 5, 6. who had ſilver and gold in abundance, that "his "heart was lifted up in the way of God's "commandments."—If we read the beginning of the eighteenth Pſalm, in connection with the title prefixed to it, we ſhall diſcover another amiable inſtance of the moſt exact

obedience to the command in my text. The title runs in theſe words:—*A Pſalm of David, the ſervant of the Lord, who ſpake unto the Lord the words of this ſong, in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul; and he ſaid*, verſe 1. "I will love thee, O "Lord, my ſtrength."—But few, alas! comparatively ſpeaking, walk in the ſteps of theſe holy men. Even a pious Hezekiah, "rendered not again according to the bene-"fits done unto him, but his heart was lifted "up;" for which cauſe "there came wrath "upon himſelf, and upon Judah, and upon "Jeruſalem."

Great indeed is our national felicity; but equally great is our danger of abuſing it.—Scarcely had the Iſraelites eſcaped from the houſe of bondage, when thoſe very ſpoils they had recovered from their taſk-maſters were formed into an idol, which they baſely worſhipped in place of that God, whoſe outſtretched arm had wrought their deliverance. And is it not poſſible, my brethren, that the fruits of that ſucceſs with which God hath been pleaſed to favour us, may,

by

by a like abuſe, be perverted into weapons of rebellion againſt himſelf?—Luxury is the common attendant upon affluence: This unfits the mind for ſerious thinking, and breeds a coldneſs and indifference towards ſpiritual things; in conſequence of which, a ſecret diſaffection to thoſe laws which would reſtrain him, ſoon takes root in the heart of the ſenſualiſt, till, wearied with the ſtruggle betwixt Reaſon and Appetite, he at length ſets himſelf in oppoſition to God and his ways; reproaches, with the names of *oſtentation* or *hypocriſy*, all ſerious religion and godlineſs in others; turns away his eyes from the light that reproves him, and even doth what he can to extinguiſh it altogether.——Thus doth "the proſperity "of fools deſtroy them:"—"When men ſee "no changes, they fear not God." What reaſon then have we to join trembling with our mirth, and to *take good heed unto ourſelves*, leſt our table become a ſnare to us, and the uncommon bleſſings we have received, inſtead of heightening our love, ſhould cauſe us to forget the hand that beſtowed them, and prove the means of alienating our hearts

from God!——To prevent this, let me beg your attention to what I have further to offer, in the

Third and *laſt* place,—That to *love the Lord our God*, is not only the return he expects for his benefits, but the return he demands.——It is not only juſt and reaſonable in its own nature, but it is likewiſe abſolutely neceſſary on our part;—nay, it is the one thing needful; the with-holding of which ſhall unavoidably be attended with the moſt fatal conſequences.

This expreſſes the true ſpirit of the charge, and was certainly the important truth that Joſhua meant to convey to his hearers.——His great aim was, to remind them, in the *firſt* place, that all the paſt ſucceſſes were entirely owing to the favour of the Moſt High; and, *next*, to perſuade them, that upon the continuance of his Almighty protection, their future proſperity would ſolely depend.——He exhorts them indeed, verſe 6. to be "very courageous:" but for what end? Was it only to fight againſt men?——No; it was alſo that, in oppoſition

to

to all dangers and difficulties of what kind ſoever, they might ſtedfaſtly obey the Lord their God. ——" Be ye therefore very cou-
" rageous to keep and to do all that is writ-
" ten in the book of the law of Moſes,
" that ye turn not aſide therefrom, to the
" right hand or to the left." And then, ſays he, verſe 10. " One man of you ſhall
" chaſe a thouſand, for the Lord your God
" is he that fighteth for you." But he adds, in the verſes following my text, " If ye go
" back, and tranſgreſs the covenant of the
" Lord your God, know for a certainty,
" that the anger of the Lord ſhall be kind-
" led againſt you, and ye ſhall quickly pe-
" riſh from off the good land which he hath
" given you."—Accordingly, we are told, in the ſecond chapter of the book of *Judges*, that when the ſucceeding generation forſook the Lord, and ſerved other gods, " then
" the anger of the Lord was hot againſt Iſ-
" rael, and he delivered them into the hands
" of ſpoilers that ſpoiled them, and he ſold
" them into the hands of their enemies round
" about; ſo that they could not any longer
" ſtand before their enemies, and they were

" ſore diſtreſſed." Now all theſe things happened to them for enſamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.——God is always the ſame; he is " in one mind, and " none can turn him." His love to righteouſneſs, his hatred of ſin, are both unchangeable; and therefore the truth of that aſſertion muſt be equally unchangeable, that " righteouſneſs exalteth a nation;" whereas " ſin is the reproach," and, if obſtinately perſiſted in, muſt prove the ruin " of any " people."——" For wickedneſs burneth as " the fire, it ſhall devour the briers and " thorns, and kindle in the thickets of the " foreſts, and they ſhall mount up as the " lifting up of ſmoke; through the wrath " of the Lord of hoſts is the land darkened, " and the people ſhall be as the fuel of the " fire." *Iſa.* ix. 18.

Ought we not then *to take good heed unto ourſelves, that we love the Lord our God?* Joſhua gave this advice to the Jews a long time after the Lord had given them reſt from all their enemies round about. We, my brethren, are ſtill engaged in war, the

the iſſue of which is always doubtful. We have drawn the ſword, and thus far have employed it with glory and ſucceſs: But it was a prudent caution which Ahab gave to Benhadad, "Let not him that "girdeth on the harneſs boaſt himſelf as "he that taketh it off." Our enemies are weakened, but they are likewiſe greatly irritated; and ſtill they are a ſtrong and formidable people. We can look back upon a time when our own ſituation was very unpromiſing;—when every alarm brought a panic along with it, till roufed by inſult, and a ſenſe of danger, the national ſpirit at length awoke; vigorous meaſures were purſued; and, by the good hand of our God upon us, have wonderfully proſpered. —Is it a thing impoſſible, is it even improbable, that ſimilar cauſes may produce ſimilar effects in the councils and meaſures of the nation with whom we contend?

Were they in reality weaker than we are willing to ſuppoſe, it would ill become us to deny a truth, of which we ourſelves have ſo lately had the happy experience, to wit, "That the battle is not always to

"the

" the ſtrong." Both at *Minden* and *Quebec*, every advantage for victory is now certainly known to have been on the ſide of our enemies. The fate of nations is not determined by the policy of men: the events of war are conducted and over-ruled by a higher hand than the arm of fleſh. Hear what God ſaid to the Jews by the Prophet *Jeremiah*: " Though ye had ſmitten the " whole army of the Chaldeans that fight " againſt you, and there remained but " wounded men among them, yet ſhould " they riſe up every man in his tent, and " burn this city with fire." — " Without " me," ſays he by another Prophet, " they " ſhall bow down under the priſoners, and " they ſhall fall under the ſlain."

Bleſſed be God, we have large and manifold grounds of thankſgiving; but the very grounds of our thankſgiving are likewiſe monitors of humility, and preſs the neceſſity of ſecuring the friendſhip of that Almighty Being, who " doth according " to his will in the armies of heaven, and " amongſt the inhabitants of this earth." Pride and ſecurity are fatal preſages of approaching

proaching ruin.——" Before deſtruction " the heart of man is haughty." How awful was the doom pronounced againſt Tyre! (*Ezekiel* xxviii. 2. *et ſeq.*). " Thus " ſaith the Lord God, Becauſe thine heart " is lifted up, and thou haſt ſaid, I am " a god, I ſit in the ſeat of God, in the " midſt of the ſeas; yet thou art a man, " and not God, though thou haſt ſet thine " heart as the heart of God: behold, thou " art wiſer than Daniel; there is no ſe- " cret that they can hide from thee: " with thy wiſdom, and with thine un- " derſtanding, thou haſt gotten thee riches, " and haſt gotten gold and ſilver into thy " treaſures: by thy great wiſdom, and by " thy traffic, haſt thou increaſed thy riches, " and thine heart is lifted up becauſe of thy " riches. Therefore thus ſaith the Lord " God, Becauſe thou haſt ſet thine heart as " the heart of God; behold therefore, I will " bring ſtrangers upon thee, the terrible of " the nations: and they ſhall draw their " ſwords againſt the beauty of thy wiſdom, " and they ſhall defile thy brightneſs. " They ſhall bring thee down to the pit,

" and

" and thou ſhalt die the deaths of them that " are ſlain in the midſt of the ſeas."

Let *us* learn wiſdom from *their* folly. ——Let their puniſhment admoniſh us to beware of that pride which God abhorreth: ——Let the manifold goodneſs we profeſs to celebrate this day, lead us to " that re- " pentance which is never to be repented " of;"—and let us fervently pray, That " the " Holy Spirit may be given unto us, to ſhed " abroad the love of God in our hearts," as an effectual principle of all holy obedience. Then may we hope, that the Lord of Hoſts will go forth with our armies, and lead them on to new and ſtill greater triumphs; till at length the deſolations of war ſhall be happily terminated by a ſafe, an honourable, and laſting peace. Which may God of his infinite mercy grant, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. *Amen.*

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.